UNESCO
The Courier
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JAPAN

TODAY

A time to live...

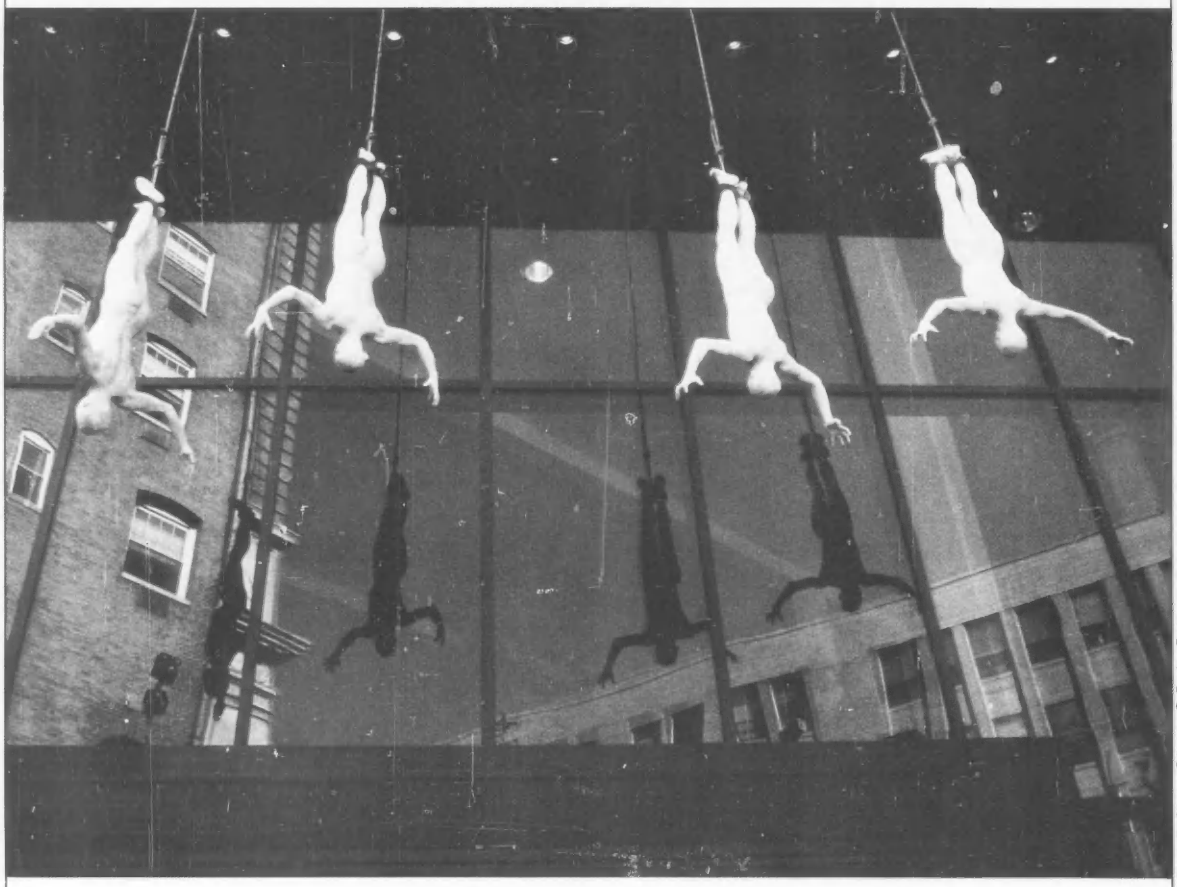

Photo T. Charles Erickson © Rapho, Paris

The dance of life

Suspended from ropes like spiders dropping down their silken threads, these exponents of Japanese *butō* dancing are members of the "Sankai Juku" troupe photographed during a performance in the United States. *Butō* is a dance form in which the moment of birth is recreated, with the ropes as symbols of umbilical cords. The dancers, whose virtually naked bodies are covered with rice-flour and paint, are being slowly lowered to the ground from the top of the building by men who pay out the ropes to which they are fastened. As they descend, to the strains of eerie, supernatural music, they express in movement the reactions of a new-born child. An exploration of the sources of dance and of life itself, *butō* has become a leading dance form in Japan since it emerged in the early 1960s.

60 Japan

Covers: Collage of Japanese motifs and crumpled paper composition evoking the Japanese flag have been specially designed for this issue by the Japanese artist Ado, who also executed the ideogram "Japan" reproduced on the opposite page and elsewhere in the issue.

Photos © Ado / *The Unesco Courier*

Editorial

Expo '70—the Ōsaka Universal Exposition of 1970—marked a turning point in the history of modern Japan. It symbolized the country's renewed prosperity and reasserted its position in the world. With hindsight it can also be seen as the culmination of a period of massive technological achievements, triumphant modernization and major city-planning projects. The oil crises of the 1970s would act as a brake on economic expansion, and the production system and social life in general would evolve towards greater diversification and individualism.

The following years saw the development of new trends in art and architecture, in industrial design and literature, given wide publicity by the media, whose power heralded the development of a veritable "communications society". On the international scene today, after a long period of absorbing Western science, technology and ways of thinking, Japan appears as a pioneer of the scientific revolution of the late twentieth century, and is making a distinctive contribution in many fields of creative activity. At home, the inconveniences of urban life are a reminder that there is a price to pay for accelerated growth.

We have tried in the following pages to give a picture, necessarily incomplete, of a changing country as it seeks to chart a course for the future and to understand the cultural factors that underlie its extraordinary economic success. As well as the intrinsic fascination of Japan—its social and economic systems, its technology and its culture—perhaps this picture also reveals achievements and problems inevitably associated with the growth of industrial civilization.

Federico Mayor Zaragoza elected Director-General of Unesco

Mr. Federico Mayor Zaragoza, of Spain, was elected Director-General of Unesco for a 6-year term by Unesco's General Conference on 7 November 1987. He succeeds Mr. Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow of Senegal, who was Director-General since 1974.

Mr. Mayor, who has taught biochemistry at the University of Madrid and at the University of Granada of which he was Rector, served as Deputy Director-General of Unesco from 1978 to 1981 before becoming his country's Minister of Education and Science.

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40th year

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A window open on the world

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Signs of a new individualism

The State, the family and the company in Japan today

Right, a happy couple in a Tokyo park. A decline in the birth-rate and the ageing of the population (the Japanese longevity rate is among the world's highest) are major recent demographic trends in Japan. People are also spending less time at the workplace and in the family, and life-styles are becoming more diversified.

by Masakazu Yamazaki

IT is generally agreed that the 1970s were a crucial decade in contemporary Japanese history, but it is less easy to define their precise significance. The preceding decade of the 1960s, by contrast, left a clear-cut impression on all of us as a time of dramatic change.

In the 1960s, the fruits of economic growth were just beginning to be visible, and the theme of growth was the central concern both for those who sought to promote it and for its opponents. Increasingly, people felt that Japan had recovered from the isolation following its defeat in the Second World War and that the postwar era was over. "Internationalization" emerged as a key goal for the new era.

The 1970s, by contrast, were a period without heroic slogans, and the decade left no memorial in the form of a major festival or celebration. People began to talk of the 1970s as "an age of uncertainty", a phrase borrowed from the title of a book by John Kenneth Galbraith.

The changing image of the State

One of the most notable changes that took place in this period was the decline in the image of the State. Of course, the State has by no means lost its role as a functioning political system. But the 1970s saw a rapid diminution of the State in individual perception.

During the hundred-year process of modernization and industrialization that began with the Meiji Restoration of 1868[1], the State was perceived as an immeasurable, powerful force in determining national attitudes. For the Japanese, modernization dramatically changed the concept of the *nation*, which ceased to refer simply to an ethnic community, as it had in pre-modern times, and came to describe an instrument of collective purpose.

The State was greatly reinforced by its use as an instrument of collective purpose during the process of modernization. In particular, modernization heightened people's feeling that their lives were dedicated to the achievement of national goals. This tendency reached its apogee during the 1960s when Japan moved into second place in the market-economy countries in terms of GNP.

The 1960s were also a decade of remarkable achievements in foreign policy. People were stirred by the success of the negotiations for the return of Okinawa. The 1964 Tokyo Olympics and Expo '70 were also national events, orchestrated by the State before a world-wide audience. And the people were able to witness these events via the new nationwide medium of television. If the 1960s were a time of clear-cut goals, it was because the State itself had clear objectives and played a leading role in managing great national events.

If we look more closely, however, we find that the Japanese State was permitted to follow such a dramatic course of action and pursue a single goal with such fervour because Japan was still a minor nation. In the Meiji era, when Japan was an industri-

1. In the mid-19th century, in response to foreign pressure, Japan ended over two centuries of isolation and opened its ports to international trade. In 1868, a strong central government was restored, under the symbolic authority of the Emperor Meiji. This was a turning point in Japanese history. The *Unesco Courier* published a special issue in September-October 1968 to commemorate the centenary of the Meiji Restoration.

Photo Richard Kalvar © Magnum, Paris

ally backward State, and in the late 1940s, when it was a country defeated in war, the national goal of "catching up and overtaking" was almost entirely a domestic concern.

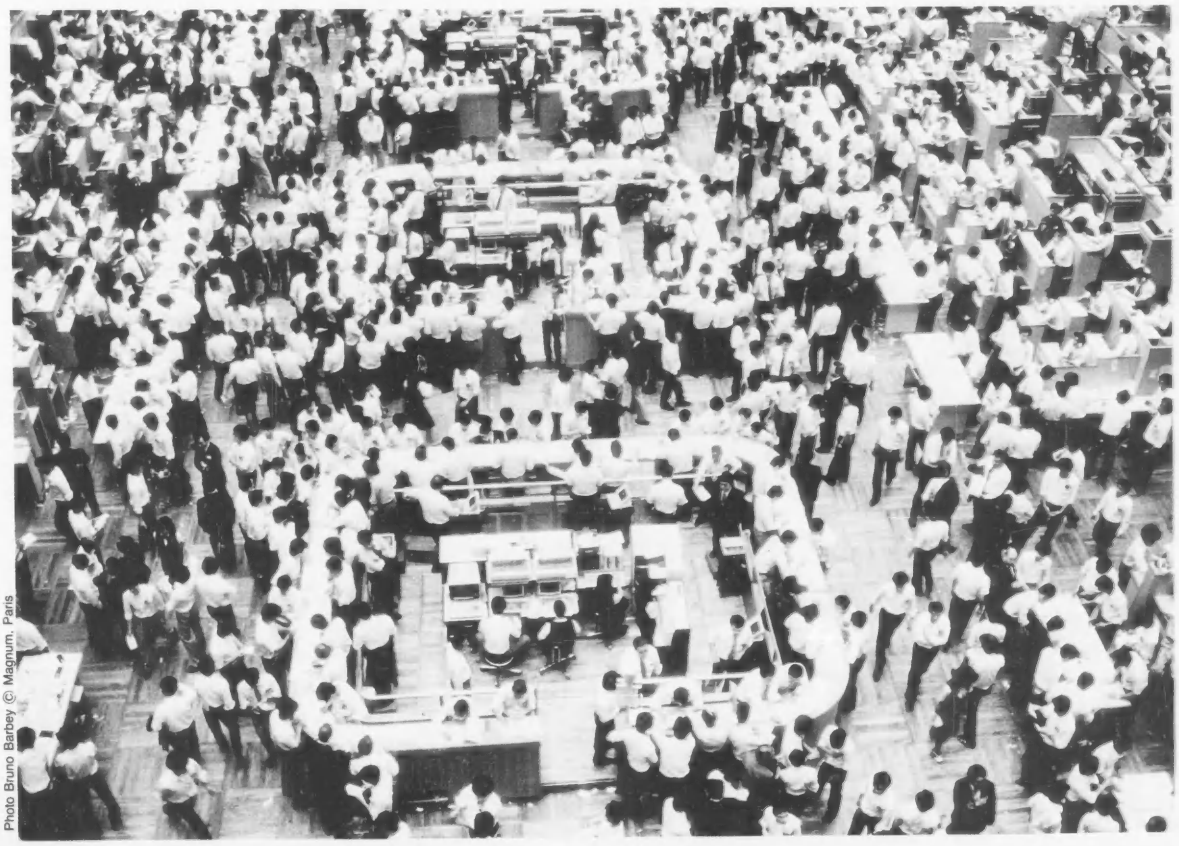
An invisible limit in this process of expansion was reached in the 1960s when Japan's GNP reached the level referred to above. Though a certain degree of economic growth would be tolerated subsequently, dramatic advances would no longer be possible in the international context. As it turned out, the first oil crisis braked Japan's economic growth during the 1970s, but it is reasonable to assume that even if the oil crisis had not occurred, something else would have happened to curb the soaring growth rates of the 1960s.

Ironically, the peaking of Japan's national strength during the 1960s eventually robbed the country of the opportunity for bold action during the 1970s. The most significant outcome was that the State lost its fascination for the people and no longer provided stimulation for their day-to-day activities or encouragement in their lives as individuals. The State ceased to be a "combat force" working towards a major objective and became instead a "technical force" concerned with maintaining a delicate balance among countless minor problems. It was no longer an arena for great celebrations but the realm of day-to-day administration.

The local community

Of course, the full implications of this change were not apparent at the time. One extremely symptomatic development, however, was the sudden appearance of the vogue phrase "the local era" at the close of the 1970s. Local magazines began to be produced for people living in specific areas. The development of these magazines, a revolutionary phenomenon in the history of Japan's highly centralized publishing industry, was paralleled by growth in the circulation of local newspapers and in the number of young people listening to local radio stations. These may seem to be minor changes, but when it is remembered that during the 1960s the

"The surplus in the work force stimulated the growth of the service industries, strengthening the concept of consumption without production." Below, the Tokyo Stock Exchange, one of the world's leading financial centres.



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"The State ceased to be a 'combat force' working towards a major objective and became instead a 'technical force' concerned with maintaining a delicate balance among countless minor problems. It is no longer an arena for great celebrations but the realm of day-to-day administration." Above, the traffic control centre at police headquarters in Tokyo, where 8 million vehicles ply through the streets each day.

"The number of new publications increased steadily throughout the 1970s. The range of specialized and educational publications also widened..." The Japanese are avid readers and their practice of reading wherever and whenever they can is so widespread that it has a special name, tachi yomi *(reading standing up). Below, a young man browsing in a bookshop selling computer magazines.*

Photo Richard Kalvar © Magnum, Paris

information media were almost totally dominated by national television, it becomes clear that a highly significant and subtle shift had occurred in popular interests.

New kinds of citizens' movements, led by local government, also began to appear throughout Japan in the 1970s. Traditionally, citizens' groups were formed on the basis of political or ideological ties and formed a mirror image of national politics. But these new groups were much more closely linked to the interests of their own communities. Many were cultural in nature and engaged primarily in recreational or educational activities. Some went a step further and sought to promote local development through "cultural industries". Community colleges, environmental groups, civic choirs and local craft groups all took on new significance and began to serve as nuclei to encourage residents to identify more closely with their community.

Today we are seeing the emergence of a milieu in which the individual, in the course of his or her daily life, can relate to the group while maintaining a certain distance, identifying with it on a more rational, multivalent basis. In other words, people are becoming more individualistic in their attitudes to everyday living and the individualistic aspects of society in general are being strengthened. Seen in this light, the changes that have occurred in the image of the State are part of a wider trend. A number of other symptomatic develop-

ments occurred during the 1970s, perhaps by historical accident. All these changes, at least externally, have served to move Japanese people in the direction of greater individualism.

More time to spare

The most important groupings in modern Japan apart from the State are probably the company and the family. Over the past decade, both these institutions have undergone a quiet but nevertheless extremely far-reaching alteration.

In the 1970s, probably for the first time since the Meiji Restoration, the amount of time that the Japanese spent in their workplaces or with their families declined.

According to data published by the Ministry of Labour, the six-day working week was in force in 71.4 per cent of workplaces in 1970. By 1980, this figure had plummeted to 23.7 per cent, indicating a threefold increase in the percentage of companies letting workers have at least one free Saturday per month. Even more remarkable is the fivefold increase in the number of companies adopting a five-day-week. Statistics for the same period relating to the number of paid holidays indicate a decline in the percentage of companies allowing between 1 and 14 days from 57.7 per cent to 25.1 per cent, while the percentage of companies allowing 15 days or more doubled.

Another widely reported phenomenon of the 1970s is the dramatic reduction in the amount of time married women spend on housework and the proportionate increase in the amount of free time at their disposal. The main reasons for this trend are believed to be the spread of electrical appliances during the 1960s and the increased availability of child-care facilities. The 1970s also saw the beginning of a rapid upsurge in the service industries, particularly the restaurant business, which played a major role in accelerating what has been called the "externalization of housework". It was in this period too that the nuclear family, the trend for which began after the Second World War, became the general rule, and the birth-rate declined.

An ageing population

The ageing of the population is a major change which is perhaps the most widely discussed issue of recent times in Japan. Its most direct impact can be seen in the decline in the relative importance of the workplace and the home. By 1976 Japan's average life expectancy had climbed to 72 years for men and 77 for women. The statistics are continuing to edge upward, and the Japanese now rank among the world's longest-lived peoples. This means that a man who starts work at 20 and retires at 55 is likely to spend less than half his life in the communal milieu of the workplace. By the same token, even if a woman has her first child in her mid-twenties and is in her mid-fifties before the last of her children leaves home, she will still devote far less than half her life to the family. For Japanese of both sexes, this implies a

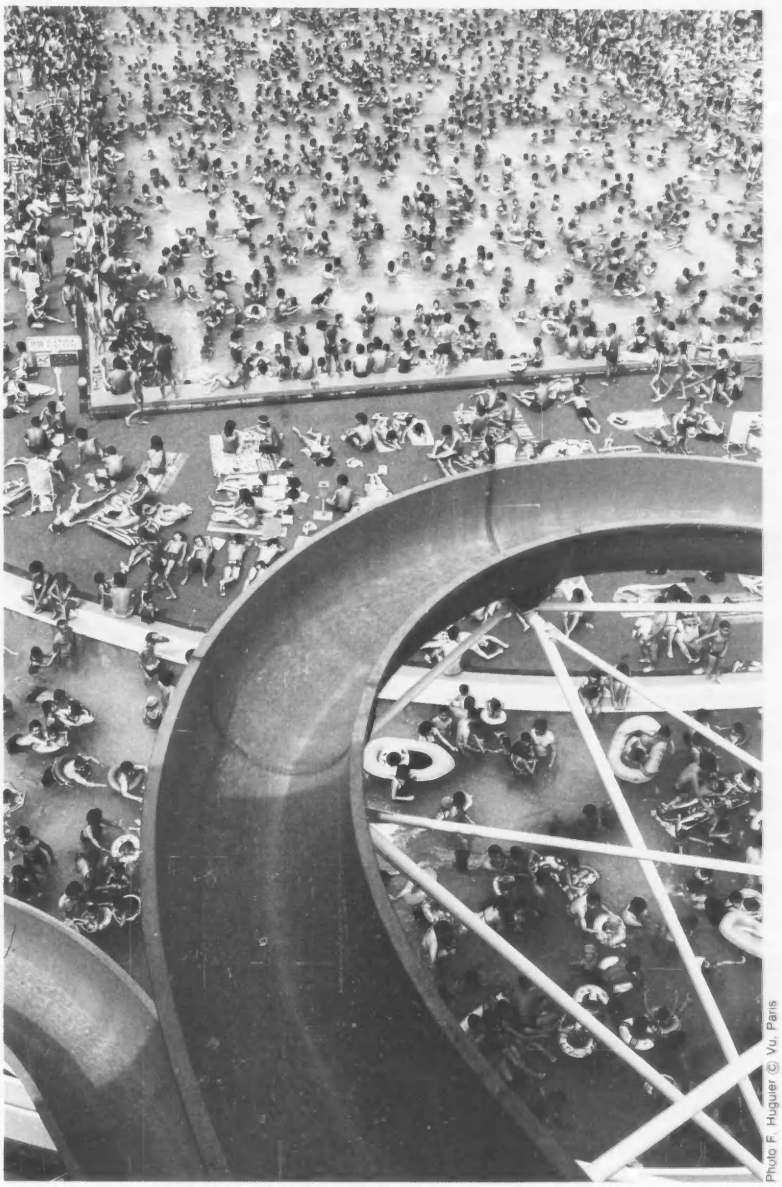


Photo F. Huguier © Vu, Paris

"A threefold increase in the percentage of companies letting workers have at least one free Saturday per month" took place in Japan between 1970 and 1980. Above, swimming pool complex that can accommodate up to 30,000 people, at Kōrakuen amusement park in central Tokyo.

日本

more diversified range of relationships outside the workplace and the family, as well as more time spent alone.

The problems faced by middle-aged and elderly people vary from person to person; they are not amenable to solution by political action at group level or by across-the-board government measures. An increase in the number of elderly persons in the population is thus more likely to encourage the development of a society characterized by diversification of perceptions, ideas and life-styles.

The influence of this change will probably be felt most strongly in various forms of fashion. We are unlikely to see the emergence of major trends, either in ideology or in styles of dress, with the potential to affect the whole of society. Even today, it is possible to perceive a tendency toward diversification in women's fashions and popular music, and it is difficult to pick out trends that characterize the era as it was possible to do in the 1960s.

The shift towards consumption

Production and consumption have always been two sides of the same coin: neither can exist without the other. Yet ever since industrialization began in the seventeenth century, the principles that have determined the fundamental patterns of modern society have been drawn almost exclusively from human relationships in the area of productive activities.

Though the supremacy of production remains largely intact, a subtle change in social values seems to have taken place in the last decade. The most important factor underlying this change has been affluence, as symbolized by the emergence during the 1960s of the saying "consumption is a virtue", but the change is perhaps more directly attributable to the energy crisis of the 1970s and the introduction of electronics technology.

The energy crisis forced consumers to economize, but far more important was its dampening effect on the creed of mass production. Previously, the goal of incentives to consume had been to boost production, but now consumers were encouraged to be more judicious so as not to overstimulate production. Meanwhile, the development of energy-efficient industries and the automation of factories through electronics produced a surplus in the working population and also permitted the production of goods better adapted to the consumer market. The surplus in the work force stimulated the growth of the service industries, strengthening the concept of consumption without production.

The 1970s were thus a period when the social value of consumption steadily began to increase. This, in itself the first such change in three centuries, was accompanied by changes in the fabric of consumer behaviour. Consumers began, first, to select goods according to more individual preferences and, second, to demand direct personal services rather than material goods.

Changes in the publishing industry typify this trend. The number of new publications increased steadily throughout the 1970s. The range of specialized and educational publications also widened in such fields as philosophy, the social sciences and the natural sciences. Along with the increase in small-format paperback books, this seems to contradict critics who talk of the decline of reading and the spread of ignorance. What we are seeing here, especially in the case of magazines, is a typical manifestation of the trend towards the production of small quantities of a wide range of goods. This phenomenon is not merely the effect of the relaxation of social ties but a sign that the Japanese are beginning to develop strong personal tastes.

The boom in cultural services

Perhaps even more significant is the fact that people have begun to seek services in the cultural sphere. People are demanding a change in the way society treats them, and the current boom in the service industries is a symptom of this phenomenon. Restaurants, hotels, travel agencies, sports clubs, adult education courses, art galleries, museums and theatre have all begun to attract large numbers of patrons; so have medical facilities and new religions.

These facilities provide not the basic physical necessities for survival but forms of intellectual and emotional satisfaction, in other words, "cultural services" in the broadest sense of the term. They take the form of the direct provision of services from person to person, eliminating mechanical means of transmission wherever possible.

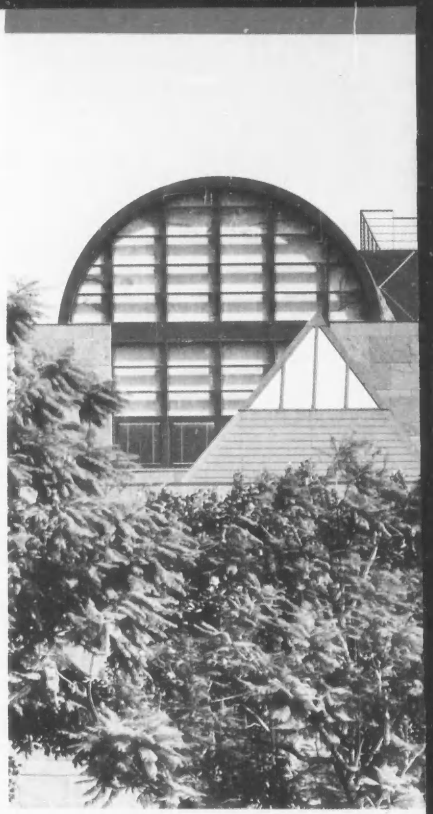
In the arts, for example, the spread of reproductions and multivolume art series has been paralleled by an increase in the number of people interested in original woodblock prints. In education, radio and television broadcasts now compete with well-attended lectures at community colleges. This apparent shift in the trend of cultural services from secondhand to firsthand experience may prove to be an important transition in terms of the broad perspective of cultural history.

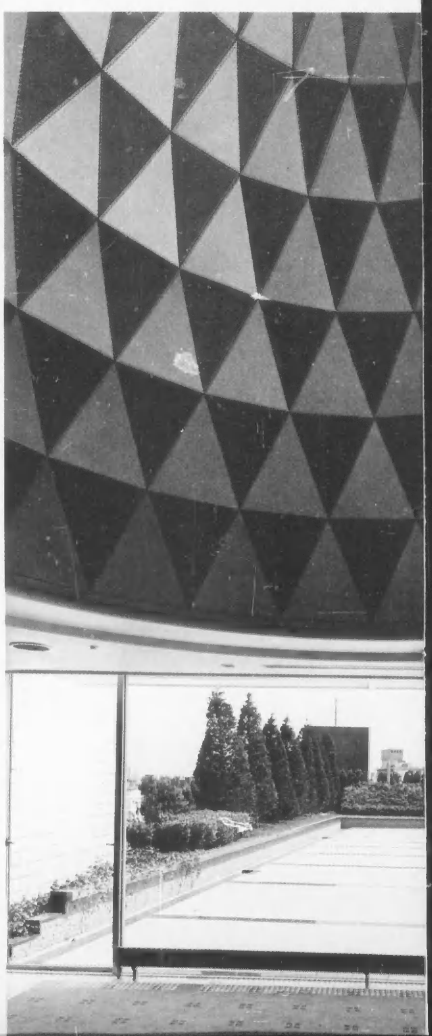
Affirmation of identity

In pre-industrial societies the majority of people were treated as "nobodies". In the industrialized democracies, all people are respected equally, but since everyone is treated in the same way, people have simply become "anybody".

Today, however, many people are affirming their identity, and societies capable of responding to this affirmation are coming into being. Until now, Japanese society has provided for this need in the context of the family and in the small groups that form within companies. People are treated as individuals by their families and their colleagues and superiors. The consensus is that groups of this type function better in Japan than in the Western countries and that they have played an important role in maintaining the psychological stability and diligence of the Japanese people.

No doubt this view is still valid today, and it is extremely unlikely that we will see a





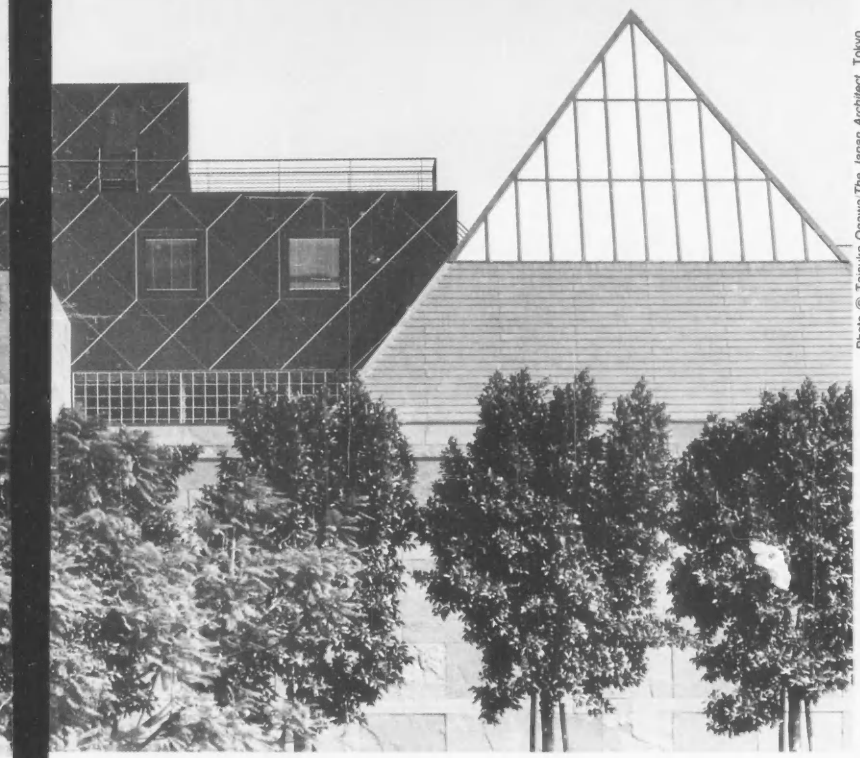


Photo © Taisuke Ogawa *The Japan Architect*, Tokyo

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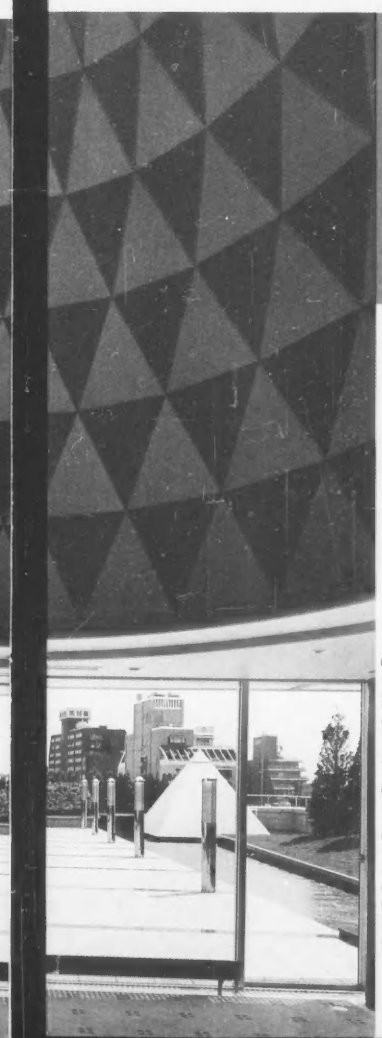
dramatic decline in the role of the home or workplace group. What is certain is that opportunities for self-affirmation can no longer be limited to these two areas. People are beginning to seek a wider range of opportunities for recognition in society at large. Many such opportunities are likely to be provided by places where cultural services are purchased as commodities, as well as in such mutual-service contexts as discussion groups and volunteer organizations.

In conclusion, we can deduce that the various social changes that have occurred since the 1970s stem from the emergence of new aspirations concerning the self and individualism. And although the overall picture is still not clear, it is probable that the individualism of the future will be totally different in nature from that of the era of industrialization. We can expect to see the individualism of maturity, of flexible and aesthetic interests and enlightened self-expression, instead of the goal-oriented individualism of competitiveness and rigid beliefs. ■

MASAKAZU YAMAZAKI, *Japanese educator, teaches at Ōsaka University and is a former guest professor at Columbia University, USA. He is the author of several books, including a study of contemporary art. This article has been adapted from a text published in August 1983 in the Japanese monthly magazine* Chūō Kōron.

Audacious architecture

"People have also begun to seek cultural services. Restaurants, hotels, travel agencies, sports clubs, adult education courses, art galleries, museums ... have all begun to attract large numbers of patrons." Three examples of modern Japanese architecture are shown here: 1. The roof garden of Spiral, a Tokyo building designed by Fumihiko Maki for a clothes manufacturing company as a centre for cultural as well as business activities. 2. Parabolic stainless steel roofs of the Fujisawa Municipal Gymnasium, some 30 km from Tokyo, also by Fumihiko Maki. 3. The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, USA, designed by Arata Isozaki, is an audacious blend of architectural styles using geometric elements.



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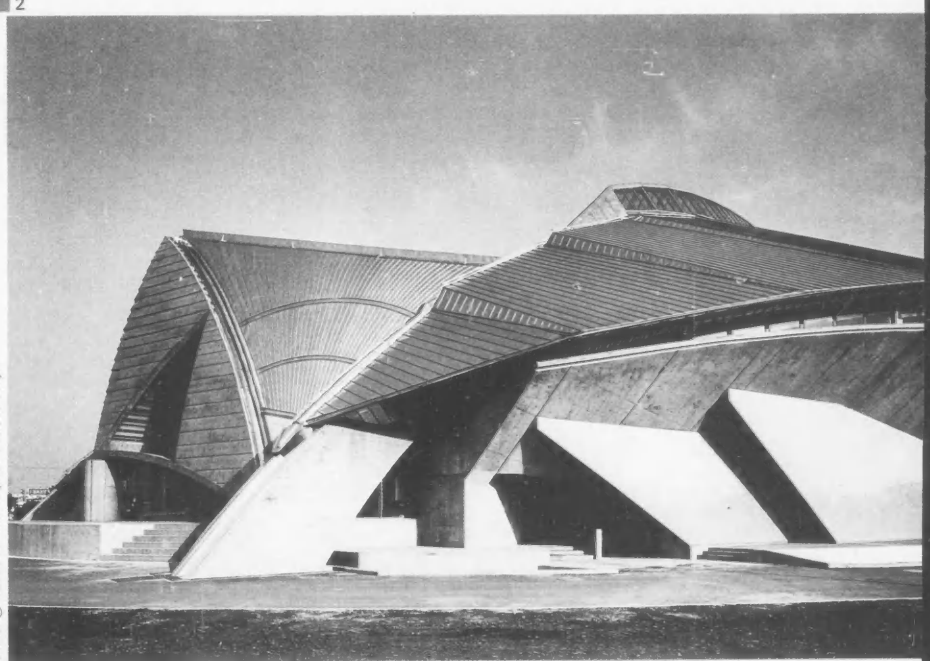

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Aiming high

Japan's demanding education system

by Kazuo Kurimoto

THE Japanese economy grew throughout the 1970s until it eventually came to account for 10 per cent of world economic activity. It is often said that education played a major role in this economic expansion. What is the nature of this contribution? What is the current state of Japanese education, and what problems does it face?

In Japan, primary education, which lasts six years, and the first three-year stage of secondary education in middle school, are compulsory and free, and enrolment is close on 100 per cent. As all the members of every class move up into the next grade together, there is no such thing as bright children skipping a year, nor do slower pupils "fail" or have to repeat a year.

The second stage of secondary education (three years of high school) is not compulsory, but enrolment is about 97 per cent of the eligible age group.

Thirty-six per cent of the young people who complete the twelve years of primary and secondary education go on to study at universities or junior colleges. A further 12 per cent proceed to higher education in specialist schools or colleges. Thus half of the relevant age group go on to institutions of higher education; and practically all of these students complete their education at these institutions.

About half of Japanese young people enter working life after finishing twelve years of education; the other half do so after undergoing some form of higher edu-

Below, students at a graduation ceremony at one of Tokyo's technological universities. Japan has a large, highly developed system of higher education which each year produces a massive output of well-trained graduates.

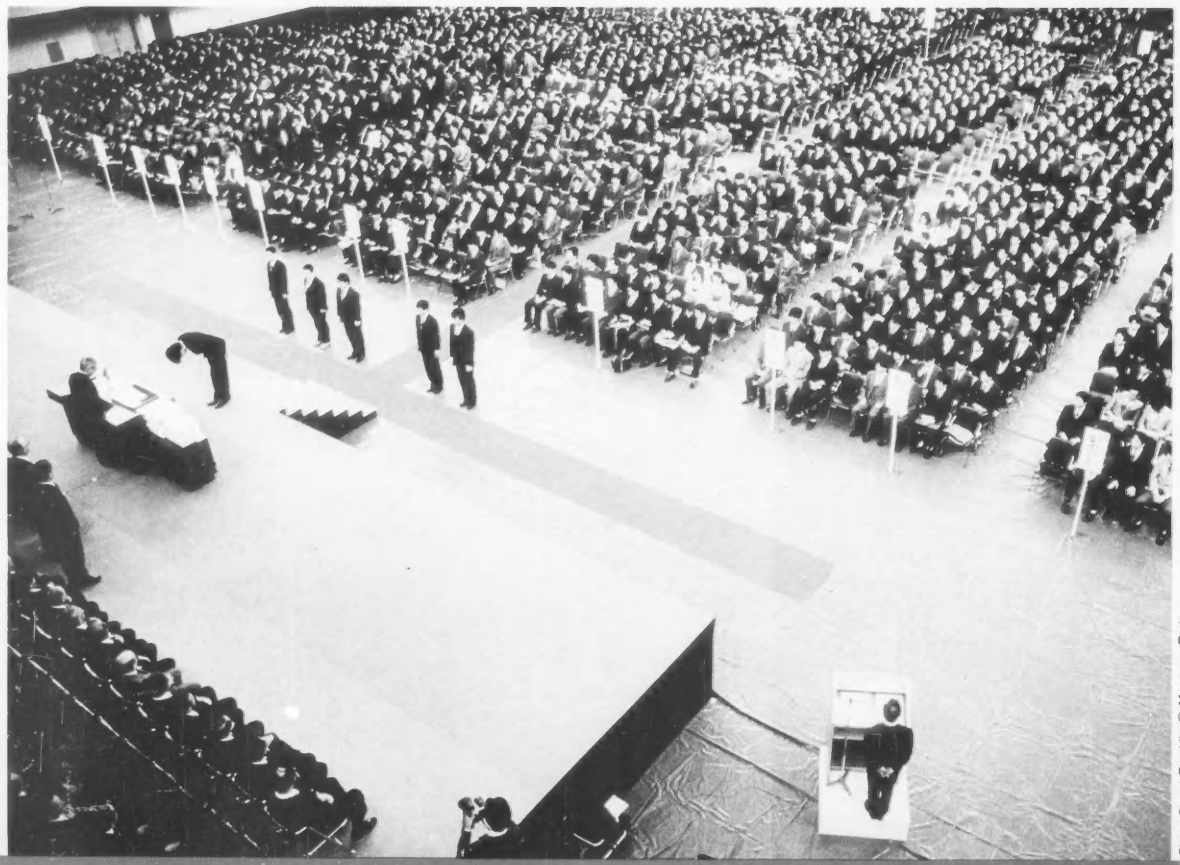


Photo Stuart Franklin © Magnum, Paris

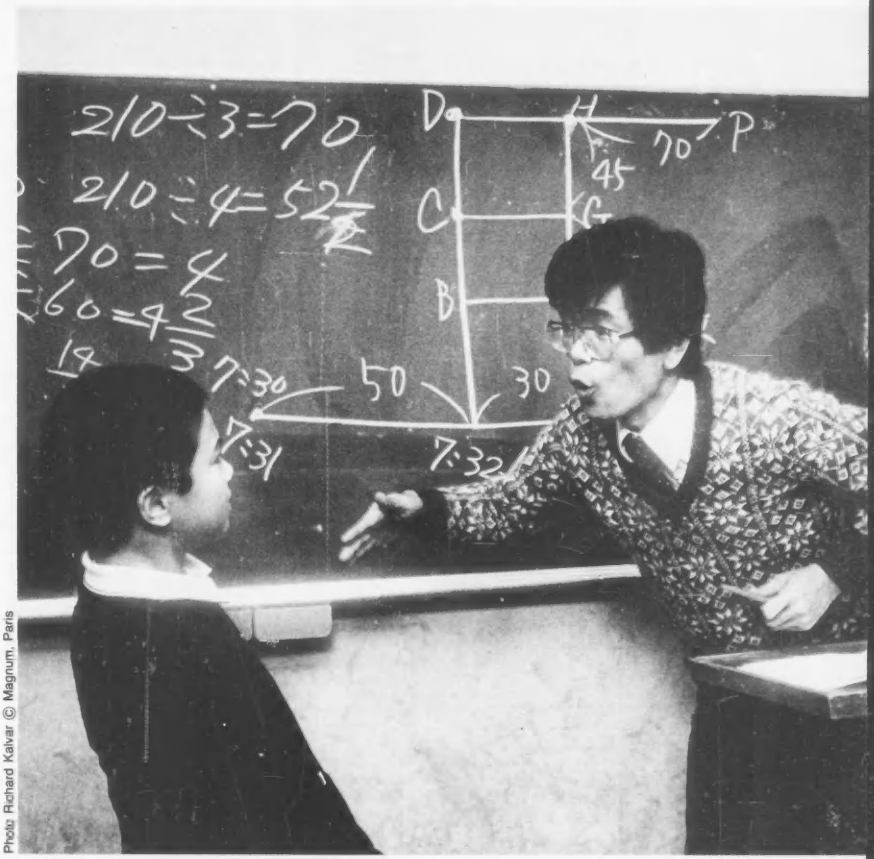


Photo: Richard Kalvar © Magnum, Paris

Juku, *private tutoring establishments where children are helped to improve their school results and older pupils are coached for university entrance examinations, are widely patronized as a complement to the "official" education system. Right, a* juku *teacher reprimands a pupil who does not know his arithmetic.*

cation. Virtually all of both groups acquire specialist or professional skills from in-service training, under something like an apprenticeship system, in the organization which they have chosen to enter on completion of their school and/or college education.

Broadly speaking, then, only half of the education which Japanese children receive as they progress to adulthood is at school, college or university. The other half consists of studies they pursue on their own when they have become fully-fledged members of society, or as part of their training within the enterprise or organization to which they belong.

In-house training

In Japan a person is not assigned once and for all to carry out a specific function at the workplace. After acquiring a variety of skills and experience within an organization, employees move on to more specialized or managerial types of work. In Japanese companies, work is not organized so that people are hired from outside and dismissed when they are no longer required. The general rule is that a fixed number of new employees, who will constitute the bottom layer of the personnel structure of the organization, are taken on every year and trained in the necessary skills, or switched to different work, as occasion may require, *within* that personnel structure. In addition to the major role of the organization in providing education and training, employees are highly motivated to study on their own account.

Society expects the school system to produce individuals with the basic skills they will need as members of the organizations they will eventually join, together with the ability and aptitude that will enable them to benefit by future training at work. People do *not* believe that the function of schools is to turn out ready-made specialists who can be useful at work without any further training after they have been hired.

The key to social status

At the beginning of 1987, a report was published on the results of joint research carried out by Japanese and US specialists on education in Japan and the United States. The Japanese team focused on education in the USA, and the American team concentrated on Japanese education, and their conclusions were published simultaneously. In their analysis of Japanese education, the US educationists made the following points:

- Japanese society is highly education-oriented. Success at school is synonymous with success in life, the only route to social and economic status.
- Japanese education produces striking results, which are the product of co-operative effort by parents, children and teachers. The education system is reinforced by historical and cultural tradition, by a close relationship between employers and education, by the availability of preschool education and, at the primary and middle school levels, by supplementary out-of-school education.
- The nine-year period of compulsory basic education is well balanced and of high quality. Both the average levels of academic achievement and the rates of attendance throughout primary and secondary education are very high.
- Japanese education also motivates pupils to succeed at school; it teaches them how to study efficiently, maintains an effective learning environment, promotes education of the whole person, and provides effective careers assistance to high school graduates.

But, according to the US report, Japanese education is not perfect. It is too rigid, too uniform. There is too little opportunity for choice; hardly any attention is paid in schools to the needs of, and differences between, individual pupils. An associated problem is that when it comes to employment an individual's academic record is given too much weight.

Why is it that Japanese society is so education-oriented, and parents are so intent on the education of their children that they send them to *juku*, private coaching establishments, for extra lessons after

school hours? The reason seems to lie in the structure of Japanese society.

A 'selection machine'

It is generally accepted that there are no ethnic divisions within Japanese society, and regional divisions have diminished as a result of rapid urbanization and the powerful impact of the mass media. Also, the widespread destruction of homes and the means of production in the Second World War, together with the subsequent land reform, meant that the nation was forced to make a new start at a time when rich and poor alike were all in equal straits, with disparities in wealth reduced to a lower level than almost anywhere in the world. People were no longer so clearly conscious of a division between "upper" and "lower" classes; and a kind of classless society emerged, in which everyone thinks of himself or herself as middle-class.

With 120,000,000 people forming a single vast group without linguistic or ethnic differences, with few variations in regional culture or vertical class divisions, social mobility is extremely easy for the able individual. On the other hand, people fear that if they do not succeed against the competition, the fall will be limitless.

In this homogeneous society, virtually the only social identity the individual can acquire is that derived from education, and the academic record, including the names of the schools children have attended, is an important factor in determining their career and lifestyle when they reach adulthood.

As pointed out above, 97 per cent of young people attend high school, and 48 per cent go on to higher education. Japan has 5,000 high schools with 4,600,000 students, 500 junior colleges with 400,000 students, and 460 universities with 1,800,000 students. With a school, college and university system on this scale, the future employers of graduates from these institutions have to adopt a method of selection. Some decide to limit their intake to graduates of specific institutions, which means that graduates of other universities are automatically excluded from joining leading companies and other organizations that may otherwise have been their first choice. In effect, the university entrance examination serves as a first stage of the examination by which employers select their new recruits. The entire school system thus acts as a kind of "selection machine" for sorting out children's future potential.

Private lessons and study groups

The ability to get into a university or some other institution of higher education is of crucial importance for a child's social and economic future. Consequently young people push themselves to the limits to pass the entrance examination of the university which offers the best conditions. In order to prepare their children for university entrance examinations, parents must first get them into a high school with a particularly good reputation. This means going to a good middle school first—and so the competition escalates. Many parents send their children to *juku* to help them obtain good marks in the fiercely competitive entrance examinations that exist at every stage of Japanese education. The children, afraid of being overtaken by their classmates, are eager to attend these extra classes.

The State school system does not sanction either the skipping of grades by gifted children or "failure" on the part of slower children. Classes are not streamed so as to separate the able from the less able pupils. There is thus a wide variety of attainment within a class; the bright children are not fully stretched, while the weaker pupils cannot keep up. The bright children find satisfaction in the lessons offered by *juku* which specialize in preparing high-fliers for entrance into "elite" universities, while other *juku* cater for those who find it difficult to keep up with the ordinary school curriculum, which they supplement by revising basic subjects in a way that these children can understand.

As well as the "academic" *juku* catering for different levels of attainment, there are *juku* which provide training in the use of the abacus, or teach brush calligraphy, not to mention the opportunities for learning afforded by private "studios" offering instruction in a variety of skills such as painting, piano-playing or swimming. Nor is it only primary and middle school children who make use of these opportunities. Japan now has an enormous variety of *juku*, "studios" and "study circles", which are used by people in every walk of life. Working adults and students attend driving schools, computer programming schools and accountancy schools, in addition to working or pursuing their academic studies. Young men and women belong to a wide range of "study groups", not only for such activities as cooking, swimming and tennis, but also for traditional subjects which predate the introduction of the modern school system, such as the tea ceremony, flower arrangement and handicrafts.

Together with the wide variety of "studios" and "study circles", the purely academic *juku* form part of a traditional "private", or unofficial, educational system. This unofficial system seems to have evolved spontaneously—behind the scenes, as it were, of the public and official system, with its uniformity, excessive suppression of individuality, and lack of freedom of choice—as a means of contributing to the development of the individual.

Japanese education today compels children to devote long hours to study. The result is that they are deprived of opportunities to play freely, and to think or test things out for themselves as individuals, away from the group. In the competition for marks in the tests which are an integral part of school life, the original aims of education become distorted. It is hardly surprising that some cannot stand this fierce competition, and find an outlet for

Photo Richard Kalvar © Magnum, Paris

Japanese companies provide a wide range of in-house training schemes which give their employees the opportunity to learn new skills and acquire a high degree of professional mobility. Left, a workman whose post has been abolished because of automation is retrained as an engineer.

Photo Richard Kalvar © Magnum, Paris

Winning admission to a good university is a major hurdle for Japanese young people hoping to achieve social status and material rewards. Above, prayers inscribed on wooden tablets have been placed in a Tokyo shrine by students anxious to succeed in their examinations.

their inability to adapt to test-dominated education in violence on school premises or in absenteeism. Both teachers and parents are fully aware that this kind of education is injurious to children's intellectual, social, emotional and physical development. However, the system is so entrenched that the minority of educationists, teachers and parents who would like to reform it have little chance of success.

Education has now become a major social and political issue. A third reform is being planned, on a scale comparable with the introduction of a modern school system in 1872 and the reforms of 1946, the aims of which were equality and expansion of educational opportunity. This is in line with the needs of Japanese society as it rapidly becomes more "internationalized" and information-oriented, and of an economy and society which is currently in the process of breaking out of a system of standardized mass production. ■

KAZUO KURIMOTO *is a Unesco staff member specializing in educational administration and management.*

An interview with Yozo Shiozaki

Photos © Dentsu Incorporated, Tokyo

A 'communications society'

A* Unesco Courier *interview with Mr. Yozo Shiozaki, President of Dentsu France S.A., a subsidiary of Japan's largest communications agency, Dentsu Incorporated, on the part played by the media in cultural life.

Photo Richard Kalvar © Magnum, Paris

Above, two stills from a publicity film for a Japanese publisher, announcing the simultaneous publication in 12 countries of a set of encyclopaedias on the animal world. The film was awarded the Grand Prix at Cannes International Advertising Festival 1987.

A forest of shimmering neon signs towers above street level in the Ginza district of Tokyo, left.

Which are the dominant media in Japan today?

Of the four "mass media"—newspapers, magazines, television and radio—the most powerful is television. There are two channels run by the State-owned Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK), and five commercial networks. Of the 39 million households in Japan, 99.7 per cent own at least one TV set, and the average individual watches three to five hours daily. Japanese people are also avid readers. Five newspapers are read nationwide, two of them *(Yomiuri Shimbun* and *Asahi Shimbun)* by over 7 million households each. Japan's newspaper circulation figures are among the highest in the world, and readership is very stable because of the high percentage of subscribers, who have their papers delivered to the home. Until the 1970s, newspapers tended to publish articles on mainly political and economic topics written for a predominantly male readership. But recently more editorial effort has gone into home life, women's pages, sport and entertainment. Over 2,000 monthly and 70 weekly magazines are also published. Radio, which was forced into the background in the early days of television, has made a comeback with the introduction of commercial stations, nearly half of which operate around the clock, especially in urban areas.

What is the role of the media in cultural life?

The contribution of the media has changed along with social developments and now includes the conception and co-ordination of cultural events as a link between private industry and the public. For example, as a communications agency we were one of the major promoters of both the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and of Expo '70 in Ōsaka. More recently, we played a major role in organizing, producing and promoting the 1985 International Exposition at Tsukuba on the theme "Science and Technology for Man at Home", which was sponsored by the Japanese Government and twenty-eight private corporations. The mass publicity given to this event encouraged some 20 million people to visit the displays, and they found that high tech developments were perhaps not as remote from their daily lives as they had thought.

Which other activities attract private sponsorship and extensive media promotion?

The first official sumo wrestling tournament outside Japan, for example, which was sponsored by a television network in 1986. The Japanese people were delighted that a sumo tournament should take place abroad, because the sport is very close to the roots of their national identity. Probably everyone in Japan watches the wrestling bouts which are broadcast on the State television network every day during tournament seasons. It's a spiritual sport, more akin to the mind than to the body. Similar coverage is given to baseball, as the *Yomiuri* actually owns the "Giants", a famous baseball team in Japan. A year ago the first concert hall in Japan to be devoted to classical music was opened in the centre of Tokyo, sponsored by a beverage manufacturer and distributor. Other cultural and educational activities which attract sponsorship are theatre and cinema performances, art exhibitions, courses for the public, creation of green spaces in cities, publishing, scholarships and international exchanges, to name but a few. The activ-

ities of Japanese companies abroad are a new trend in this booming phenomenon. Another good example of such commercial enterprise is a series of events entitled "Close-up of Japan", sponsored by a large Japanese group. In an attempt to introduce Japan's modern culture to other countries, this programme was held in San Francisco in 1983, London in 1985, and Paris in 1987.

Have the Japanese people now achieved a lifestyle which reconciles the influence of Western culture with their own traditions?

By and large, yes. At the end of the Second World War, Japan in many respects was indeed learning from the West, particularly from the United States, about education, culture, business ways, and so on. Now things have definitely changed. The Japanese are striving to express their own identity in culture, fashion and many other fields and I have a feeling that perhaps this new identity is in a small way beginning to influence the West. Up until now perhaps Japanese people were too involved in economic affairs, in pushing up their GNP, to do much else, but if they want any kind of self-fulfilment they now have to divert some of their attention from economic affairs into building up their cultural heritage. They have made a strict reappraisal of their lifestyle and they wonder whether materialism, the mere fact of owning things, of consuming things, is going to be enough to bring them happiness.

Do you consider that Japan is the leading communications society today?

If you consider the technical aspects, such as press readership, TV watching habits, the number of telephones or computers, Japan certainly is as much an information and communications society as, for example, the United States. But it is also true that Japan has just started privatizing its telecommunications systems, and there is still plenty of room for development. Our company, for example, is now working on advanced software for cable and satellite broadcasting, and this year we have set up a new subsidiary, the "Dentsu Institute for Human Studies". One of the first themes that this Institute will be working on is "Searching for the Identity of Japan". A symposium on this subject was organized recently, as one of the numerous activities to be developed in the future. We are in the throes of a major upheaval in society. Perhaps the Japanese people were the first to see this and to search for ways to cope with it, and perhaps in this respect they can be said to be holding the mirror to show the world what the twenty-first century may be like. ■

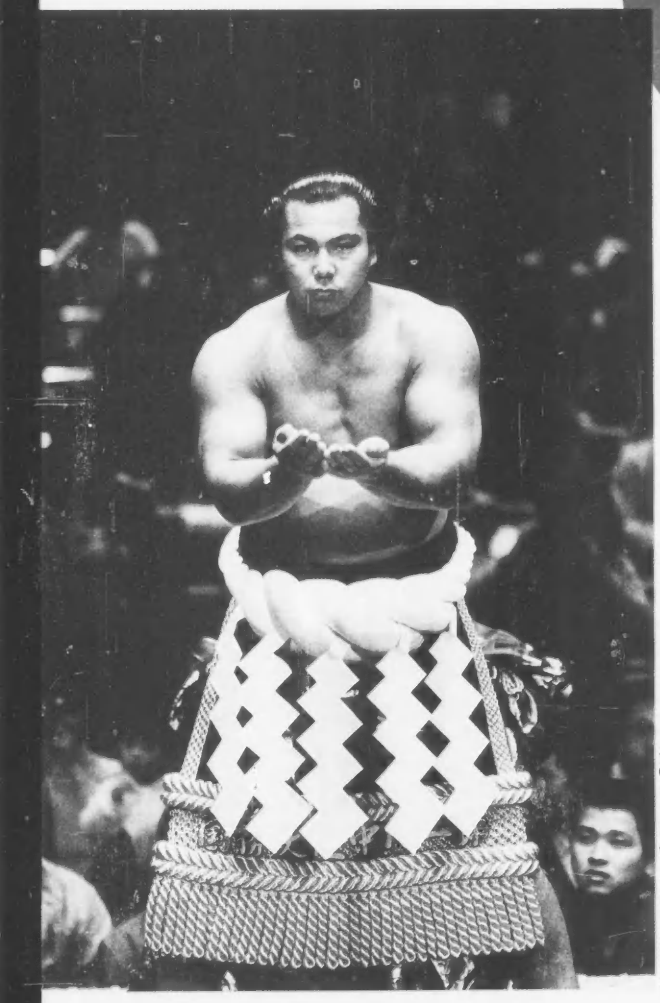


Photo Richard Kalvar © Magnum, Paris

Left, a Yokozuna *(grand champion) of sumo. This ancient style of wrestling, thought to have originated in Japan nearly 2,000 years ago, has close associations with the Shintō religion. Today sumo is a mass spectator sport, at which several hundred specially selected athletes make their living. Six major championships are held annually, attracting immense crowds and massive media coverage.*

Characters from a Japanese cartoon film, Come Down from the Tree, Bunna, *which was created for the celebrations marking the 30th anniversary of Japan's admission to the United Nations in 1956. The modern fable on which the film is based, by the well-known Japanese writer Tsutomu Minakami, relates how Bunna the frog learns of the interdependence of all living beings.*

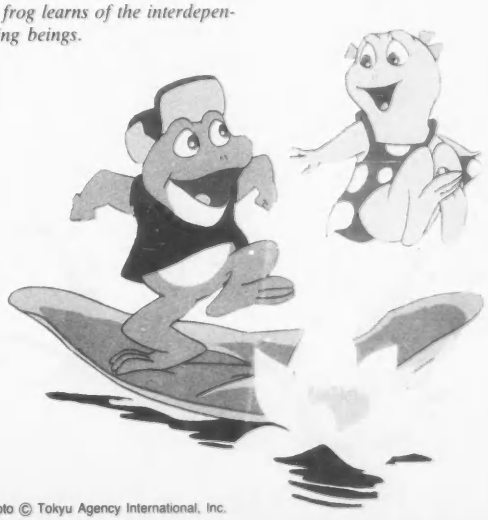
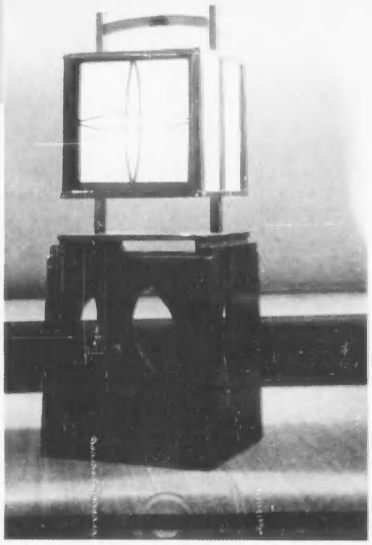
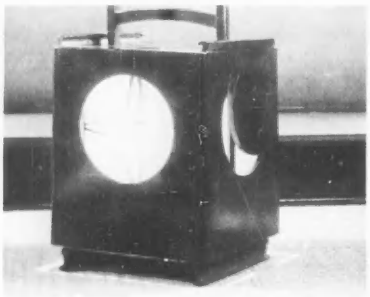


Photo © Tokyu Agency International, Inc.

The art of making light work





Above and right, traditional lamp of the Edo period (17th-19th centuries) known as an ariake *lamp or night-light. The word* ariake *designates the pale moon which can be seen at dawn and, by extension, dawn itself.*

by Motoko Ishii

LIGHTING devices of great beauty, using handmade paper, were devised at an early date in Japan. A flame produced by burning a candle or lamp oil was screened by a paper shade so as to diffuse a soft light equally in every direction. *Chōchin*, collapsible lanterns with a paper shade stuck over a bamboo frame, and *andon*, standing lanterns with a similar paper-covered frame, in this case made of thin strips of wood, were developed and widely used in the Edo period (1603-1867).

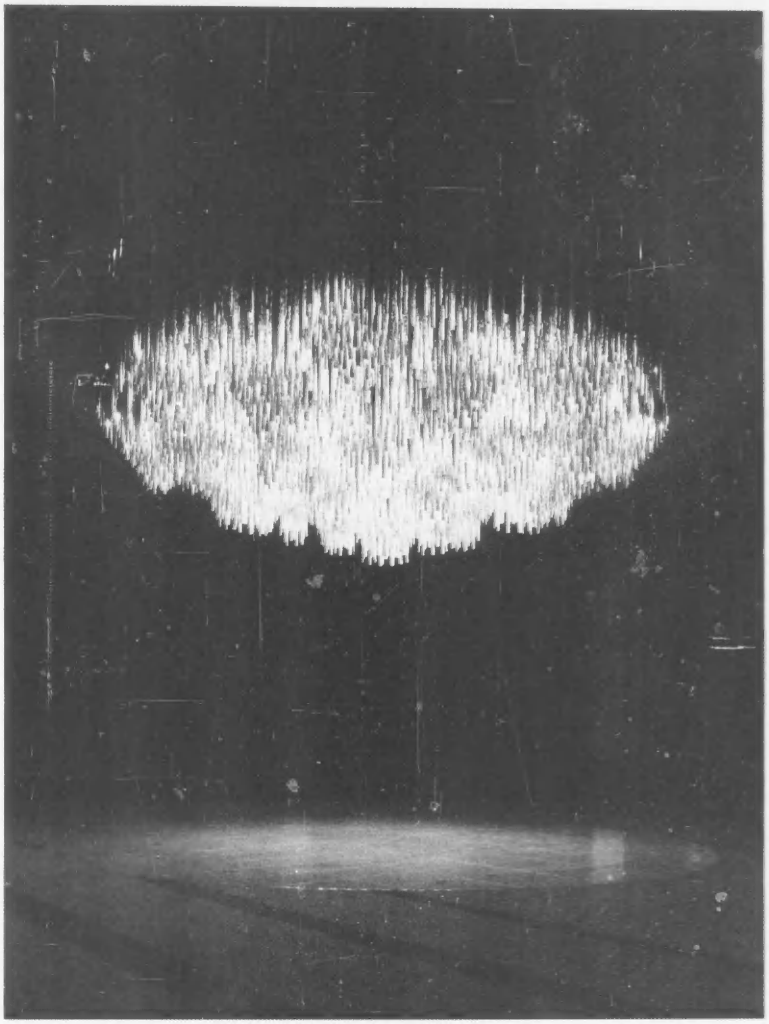
Many of these traditional means of lighting were highly ingenious and well-designed. Examples are the *Odawara chōchin*,[1] a portable lamp that could be folded so as not to take up space on a journey, the *ariake andon* (night-light), the light of which could be reduced by covering it with a wooden cube with apertures in its panels shaped like the crescent moon, or the *tsuji-andon* (crossroad lanterns), covered with a tiny roof, that were placed at crossroads and street corners to help people find their way.

Not only Japan but other Far Eastern countries such as China and Korea have from ancient times shown a special appreciation of moonlight. On the nights when the moon was full people came together to drink saké and celebrate the beauty of the moon and many fine poems describing such scenes have survived in both Japan and China. I believe that this traditional love of moonlight underlay the development of the beautiful lighting devices that were produced in Japan during the Edo period.

With the arrival of Western civilization in the Meiji period (1868-1912), gas and electric lamps made a dramatic impact. Many people were astounded by the brilliant light of the arc lamps that were installed in Tokyo's famous Ginza district in early Meiji, an event commemorated in *ukiyo-e* prints of the time. Electric lighting spread rapidly from the late 1880s onwards, but for cost reasons most houses had only one lamp in each room, suspended from the centre of the ceiling. The oil lamps of the Edo period, which stood on the floor and could be moved to wherever was convenient, disappeared altogether, and for a long period "one room, one light" was the standard practice.

Innovations were introduced into Japanese lighting after the Second World War. In the black-out during the war years, with their constant air raids and drastic short-

Japan has many Shintō and Buddhist sects, and it is possible to practise several forms of belief simultaneously. Below, the Sanctuary of the Shinji Shūmei-kai Shintō sect at Shiga. Lighting heightens the majesty of the site, adding to the atmosphere.



Photos © Motoko Ishii, Tokyo

Created in 1976 for an insurance company, this chandelier (diameter 6 metres) is made of specially processed aluminium panels with incandescent mini-bulbs, mercury-vapour lamps and fluorescent tubes. It was designed so that the light level can be varied at will, not only for aesthetic reasons but to save energy.

ages of food and other supplies, the Japanese experienced both physical and spiritual darkness. They saw a symbol of peace in the bright white light of the fluorescent lamps that began to be manufactured soon after the war.

First used in industry, which was then struggling to get back on its feet, these lamps came into domestic use in the 1950s. The number of households choosing this form of lighting for the family room known as the *chanoma* (dining/living area) grew steadily, and one product of this period was the circular fluorescent lamp (called the "Circline"[2] in Japan), an alternative to the conventional straight fluorescent tube which is unique to Japan and is still in widespread use.

The spread of fluorescent lighting raised the illumination levels of offices, factories, stations, banks and all kinds of public buildings until they were high even by international standards. Lighting technicians aimed at a shadow-free illuminated space in which the light was bright and evenly balanced. In this they had support from industry, whose first priority was to increase production, and also from architects.

The 1970s saw a second wave of innovation, initiated by Expo '70, the International Exposition held at Ōsaka in 1970. Eighty-five pavilions were erected on a 351-hectare site at Senri, a suburb of Ōsaka. Seventy-seven nations took part in Expo '70, which attracted an astonishing number of visitors—some 64 million. One of the Expo's most popular attractions was the beauty of its illuminations at night.

I was commissioned to design the lighting for five sites at Expo '70—the Electric Power Pavilion, the Art Gallery, the Takara Beautilion, the roof of the Housing Capsule in the "Symbol Zone", and the Japanese Garden. My proposals involved rejecting the concept of uniformly and brightly lit space which had until then been the guiding principle of lighting in Japanese architecture, in favour of the idea of a more "animated" space using both light and shade with a moderate level of brightness; a form of lighting that would form a link between people and architecture.

In the Electric Power Pavilion, a variety of different light sources were used throughout the building, and a programme was devised for continuous blinking on and off and for modulating each source. In the Art Gallery a wave-like effect was attempted, by setting clear bulbs into the glazed framework of the large foyer and alternating different circuits in the vertical direction, the variations in light intensity making it appear as if the space were "breathing". In the Japanese Garden, on the other hand, the effect we aimed at was that of a tranquil, gentle light. In all these sites no effort was spared to create new, experimental forms of architectural lighting. Expo '70 was the scene of many other such experiments, which found wide acceptance.

Interest in lighting as a source of enjoyment and of beauty, as distinct from its merely functional role, has grown in Japan ever since. I have been involved, with leading architects such as Kenzō Tange, Yoshinobu Ashiwara and Kiyonori Kikutake, in numerous design projects including hotels,

1. Odawara: a city in the Kanagawa department, some 80 km from Tokyo. The lamp described here was invented in the 16th century by Jinzaemon, a native of Odawara.

2. Like many other terms in modern Japanese, this word (originally a trade name) is based on a very free adaptation of English words, in this case "circular line". *Editor.*

theatres, embassies and commercial buildings.

In the mid-1970s the Japanese economy, which for some time after Expo '70 had appeared to be in good shape, was hit by the dramatic rise in oil prices. The profession of lighting design was directly affected by the oil crisis. Chandeliers were switched off, as were all the light bulbs in ornamental lighting brackets beyond the number needed to provide a bare minimum of light. Even the spectacular neon illuminations in the Ginza district went dark. For those involved with lighting, like myself, it was a heartbreaking time.

By the end of the 1970s, however, Japan had recovered from the oil shock. While due regard was still paid to the need to save energy, bright lights reappeared in shops and offices. Incandescent lamps with a high power consumption were replaced in many cases by HID (high intensity discharge) lamps, and cold cathode tubes and neon lighting became increasingly popular.

With the 1980s came a general preference for greater balance in lighting design. Another trend can be seen in the growing number of buildings requiring special forms of lighting, particularly religious buildings.

The Shiga Sacred Garden of the Shinji Shūmei-kai, a Shintō religious body, was completed in 1983. At the centre is a sanctuary to the movement's founder.

Within the vast internal space, which is 40 metres high, a diffused light, mostly from concealed sources, creates a sense of solemnity and awe. The lighting here plays a similar role to that of an atmosphere of appropriate temperature and humidity.

On the night of the ceremony marking the completion of the sanctuary, I put on a laser beam show in the plaza in front of the building. One of the greatest discoveries of the present century, the laser beam is a powerful, artificially "bunched" or narrowed ray of light beamed in a single direction. Using laser beams as a medium for "free composition", we succeeded that night in giving light a new form of expression—in endowing light with an existence of its own, independent of architectural space.

My current task is to create new forms of light in all kinds of architectural space, using different light sources and a variety of control techniques. At the same time, I hope to revive the traditional Japanese sensibility to lighting, with its special feeling for the beauty of moonlight. ■

MOTOKO ISHII *studied industrial design at Tokyo University of Fine Arts before specializing in the new field of lighting design and installation, in which her work at the 1970 Ōsaka Exposition attracted widespread attention. She has won an international reputation for such projects as the lighting of the Okinawa Ocean Expo '75 and of several pavilions at the Tsukuba International Exhibition in 1985, and has been invited to work in many countries.*

Colours to whet the palate

JAPANESE cuisine, it has been claimed, is a feast not only for the taste-buds, but also for the eyes; in a case like this, I would even be tempted to say: not just a feast for the eyes but, better still, for the spirit! A contemplative state of mind is induced by the quiet harmony between the glow of candles flickering in the gloom and the reflections in the lacquerware. Some years ago, the great writer Sōseki[1] celebrated in his *Kusa-makura*[2] the colours of the *yōkan*,[3] and in a sense these colours are also, surely, aids to meditation. Consider their cloudy surface, semi-translucent like jade, the impression that they convey of drawing sunlight into their very substance and holding in their depths a tremulous glimmer like a dream; consider the deep harmony of colour tones, and their complexity; you will not find these in any piece of Western confectionery. To compare them to some cream or custard would be superficial and naive.

Now take a lacquer cake dish and set upon it the subtly-tinted harmony of a *yōkan*, place it in the shadows so that its colour is scarcely discernible and you will find that its power of focusing contemplation is even stronger. And when at last you carry to your lips this cool, smooth substance, you will feel as if part of the darkness of the room, solidified into a morsel of sweetness, were melting on the tip of your tongue, and in this *yōkan*—which is, after all, rather insipid—you will discover an unusual depth that enhances its taste.

In all the countries of the world, efforts have doubtless been made to create pleasing colour combinations with food, tableware and even the walls in the background; at any rate, if Japanese dishes are served in surroundings that are too well-lit, or in crockery that is predominantly white, they lose half their attraction. Take the red *miso*[4] soup, for example, that we eat every morning; look at the colour of it, and you will have no difficulty in understanding that it was invented in the dark houses of a bygone age. One day, when I had been invited to a tea party, I was given a serving of *miso*, and when I saw that murky, clay-coloured soup that I had always eaten without paying it much attention—when I saw it by the soft glow of candlelight, lying like a calm pool in the curve of the black lacquer bowl, I discovered that it had real depth and the most appetizing of hues.

Shōyu,[5] a sticky, glistening sauce, also gains much from being seen in the shadows, and is perfectly at home in darkness, especially if one follows the custom of the Kyōto region for seasoning raw fish, or pickled or boiled vegetables, and uses the thick variety called *tamari*. Similarly, white *miso*, *tōfu*,[6] *kamaboko*,[7] steamed sweet potato cakes, white fish—all white foods, in short, are not shown off to advantage if their surroundings are brightly lit. Rice, above all: the very sight of it, served in a shiny black lacquer box placed in a dark corner, is aesthetically pleasing and at the same time it whets the appetite. Flawless rice, cooked to perfection, heaped in a black box and giving off hot steam as soon as one lifts the lid, every grain gleaming like a pearl: there is not a Japanese alive who can remain indifferent to this offering of sheer goodness. All this goes to show that our cuisine is meant for a shadowy setting and has an enduring bond with darkness. ■

Jun'ichirō Tanizaki

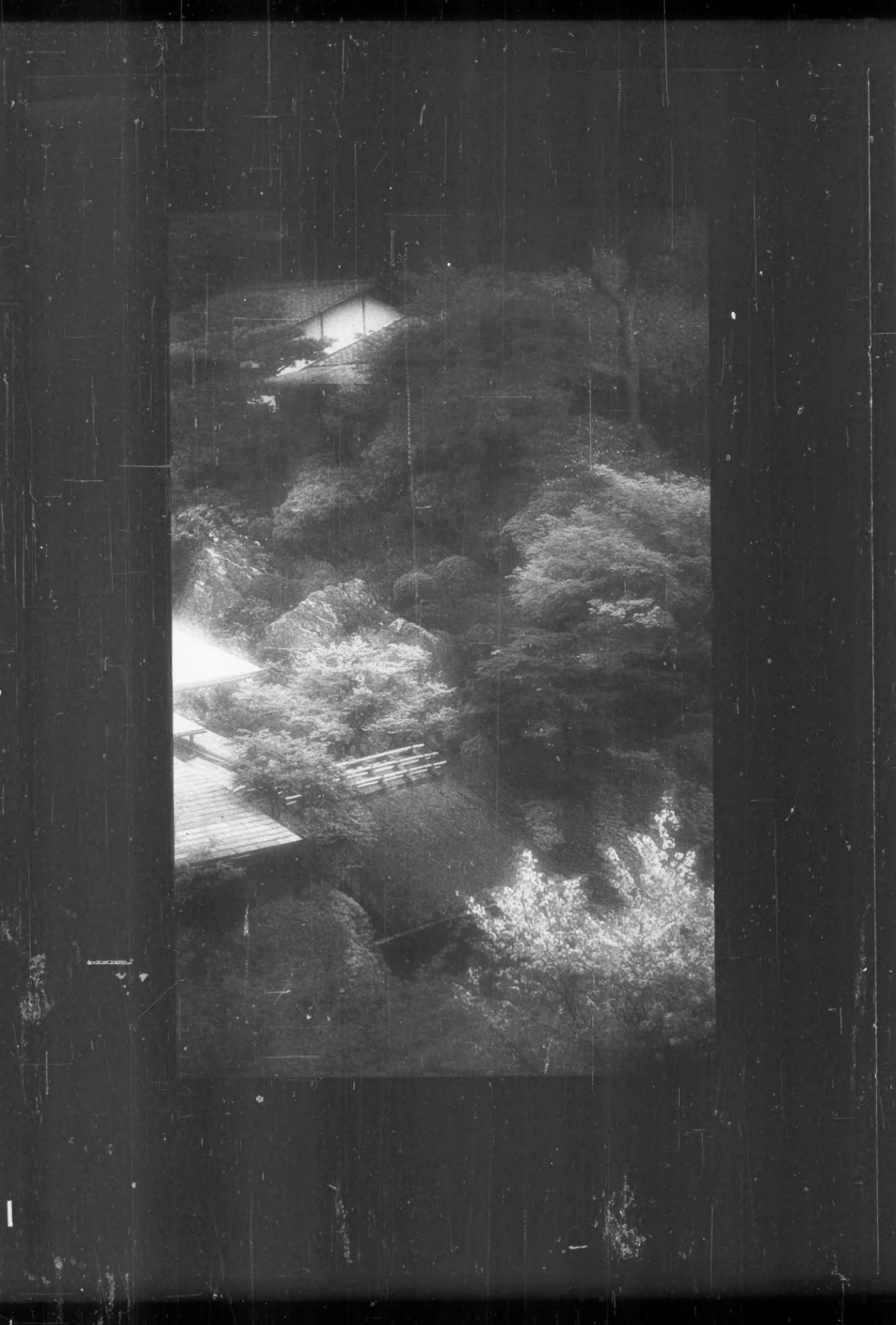
Extract from In'ei raisan *(1933; "In Praise of Shadows") by Jun'ichirō Tanizaki (1886-1965).*

1. *Sōseki.* Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916), one of the greatest Japanese novelists of the early 20th century.
2. *Kusa-makura,* "The Three-Cornered World" (a poetic expression meaning literally "the grass headrest", associated in classical literature with the notion of a journey), a novel by Natsume Sōseki, published in 1906.
3. *Yōkan,* jelly-like confectionery similar to crystallized fruit. The basic ingredients are bean paste with added sugar and agar-agar seaweed, flavoured with fruit: chestnut, persimmon, plum, etc.
4. *Miso,* a purée of fermented soya beans, boiled and mashed, with added salt and yeast. It is a basic ingredient for a soup that is always served for breakfast.
5. *Shōyu,* a brown sauce with a fermented soya base, the essential condiment used in Japanese cooking.
6. *Tōfu,* a whitish curd obtained from soya beans that have been crushed and boiled, then strained and thickened with a coagulent. *Tōfu* is used in many dishes, but it can be eaten alone, with various condiments.
7. *Kamaboko,* a firm pâté made from the flesh of certain white fish, steamed and then dried. Slices of *kamaboko* are found in a variety of dishes. *Editor.*

Colour page right

"The beauty of a Japanese room is created solely by the relationship between shadow of varying opacity, and does not depend on accessories or fittings... We delight in this delicate clarity derived from changing outer light, fixed to the surface of twilight-coloured walls, barely preserving a last vestige of life." (Jun'ichirō Tanizaki). Photo shows detail of a tea-house built at Ōsaka in 1985 by architect Tadao Andō. With its simplicity and purity of form, it is faithful to the Japanese aesthetic tradition.

Photo © Mitsuo Matsuoka/*The Japan Architect*, Tokyo



Cities at one with nature

by Augustin Berque

THE urban tradition which arose in Western Asia and spread across Europe has handed down to us the image of a town or city standing out sharply against a rural or natural background. Modern urban development has blurred this contrast by extending suburbs into the countryside and increasing the number of green spaces in towns, but this trend has not gone so far as to obliterate the antithesis that Europeans unconsciously establish between the town and nature. The city is still at one pole, the symbol of a constructed and artificial environment, and it is towards the opposite pole, that of the natural world, that owners of country cottages and holiday-makers are constantly drawn—even if that symbolic pole is often, in reality, scarcely less artificial than the town they leave behind them.

However, this typically European pattern is not universal. In particular, it does not fit Japan. Japanese towns and cities, if only because they have never been systematically enclosed by ramparts, have never been as cut off from their rural surroundings as those of Europe or China. Differences in population density between town and country have, likewise, always been relatively slight.

But the crucial factor is probably the significance of towns and cities for Japanese people in the relationship between nature and culture. Towards the end of the ancient period (3rd to 7th centuries AD), the association between towns and civilization was particularly strong in Japan, since both had been simultaneously introduced from China. However, as a result of the relative suddenness of their introduction, the urban phenomenon and civilized manners *(urbanity)* were superimposed on an indigenous view of nature which was deeply animistic, and which represented the cultural order and the natural order as a continuum. This strong inclination was to exert a twofold influence on Japanese urbanity: symbolically, on urban manners, through the expression of a refined feeling for nature in poetry and in architecture, and ecologically, on the material components of the urban environment, and in particular the central role that vegetation would play. Over the centuries and right up to the present day, the Japanese town has always given expression to nature.

The courtly and the natural

The brilliant civilization of the Heian period (8th to 12th centuries) revolved around the Royal Court in Kyōto (then called Heian). This was a time of flowering in the arts and literature which produced the *Genji monogatari*,[1] a masterpiece of world literature. Just as the English word *courtesy* is derived from "court", so the Japanese language would describe elegant manners and delicacy of taste by the word *miyabi*, derived from *miya* meaning "royal palace". The word *miyako* ("capital", i.e. Heian) has the same origin.

And yet this homology points to a radical difference of outlook. In English, words such as "politeness" (from the Greek *polis:* town or city), "civility" (from the Latin *cives:* citizen of Rome) and "urbanity" (from the Latin word *urbs*) suggest primarily relationships between people in the artificial environment of town or city. "Courtly" originally referred to the language of lovers. *Miyabi* has a quite different connotation; it concerns not the essentially polite or politic (from *polis)* relations between human beings, but the sensitive and aesthetic relationship of human beings with nature.

Indeed, *miyabi*—of which the *Genji monogatari* has left us a detailed description—was particularly apparent in the art of expressing a feeling for nature in poetry, in dress or in gardens. The criterion by which the town-bred or civilized person was judged was his or her capacity to fully appreciate cicadas, the moon, or maple trees.

Gardens and tea pavilions

By the closing years of the Heian period, this expression of feeling for nature had become stylized. It was given a new lease of life, however, by the experience of solitude in the mountains, as is borne out by the poetry of Saigyō,[2] who deliberately abandoned the life of the capital. New aesthetic values were emerging which apparently had nothing to do with the town: on the contrary. For example, in his *Hōjō-ki*,[3] Kamo no Chōmei gives a blueprint for the hermit's life, in the precarious shelter of a hut measuring "ten foot square"—only one-tenth of the size of the house in Kyōto that he had left behind.

Two or three centuries later, in the Muromachi and Momoyama periods (14th to 16th centuries), these supremely anti-urban models would reach their highest form of expression in the city, in the tea pavilion *(chashitsu)* and the little garden leading to it *(roji)*. By virtue of its small size and the materials of which it is made, the *chashitsu* is an urban metaphor for the mountain shelter, a symbol of the precariousness of life in this world. Similarly, the *roji* is, with its stepping stones, reminiscent of the harsh and rugged mountain track which leads to the pure realm of Buddha-hood.

These forms of expression themselves profoundly influenced the aesthetics of the Japanese house, especially the seventeenth-century warrior dwellings *(buke yashiki)* of the capital of the shogun, Edo (the future Tokyo). These dwellings served in their turn as the prototype of the small detached houses, each with its garden, in which many of the inhabitants of Tokyo live today.

Life in the midst of nature has thus been the inspiration for the ideal dwelling in the world's biggest city and, to an even greater extent in Japan's provincial towns, where there is not such a shortage of space.

Colour page left

"The basic model of a Shintō sanctuary ... is a wooden building surrounded by trees. On the one hand, this sacred wood (chinju-no-mori) *symbolizes the mountain forest, in the depths of which is the fountain-head of divinity ... On the other, it is an ecological representation of primeval nature, for since their vegetation must not be cut down, the* chinju-no-mori *have become relics of the forest of shining leaves which once covered the plains of Japan." Photo shows a Shintō temple at Kyōto.*

Photo Thomas Hopker © Magnum, Paris

1. The *Genji monogatari* ("The Tale of Genji"), a masterly novel in the classical Japanese tradition, was written at the beginning of the 11th century by Murasaki Shikibu, a lady of the Heian Royal Court at Kyōto. Packed with intrigue and character studies, the novel is a remarkable evocation of aristocratic court society written with an acute "sensitivity to things", in the words of the 18th-century literary scholar Motoori Norinaga.

2. The Buddhist priest-poet Saigyō (1118-1190), one of the most popular poets in Japan, was a great master of the *waka*, a traditional Japanese poetic form of 31 syllables. His many works, inspired by his solitary wanderings, expressed a love of nature and devotion to Buddhism.

3. In *Hōjō-ki* (*The Ten Foot Square Hut*, 1970), the court poet turned Buddhist monk Kamo no Chōmei (1155-1216) gives a series of brief accounts of the disasters that had befallen Kyōto during his lifetime, followed by a contrasting description of the natural beauty and peace of his hermit's life.

Photo Burt Glinn © Magnum, Paris

Ikebana, *the art of Japanese flower arrangement, has highly developed conventions and a complex symbolism. It began as a religious ritual in which flowers were offered to the Buddha, and, like the traditional Japanese tea ceremony, is a combination of beauty and austerity. In the words of one master of the art,* ikebana *must "with a little water and a flowering branch, evoke flowing streams and vast mountains".* Ikebana *is still widely taught.*

Earthquake resistant skyscrapers of concrete, steel and glass dominate Tokyo's Shinjuku business quarter, right.

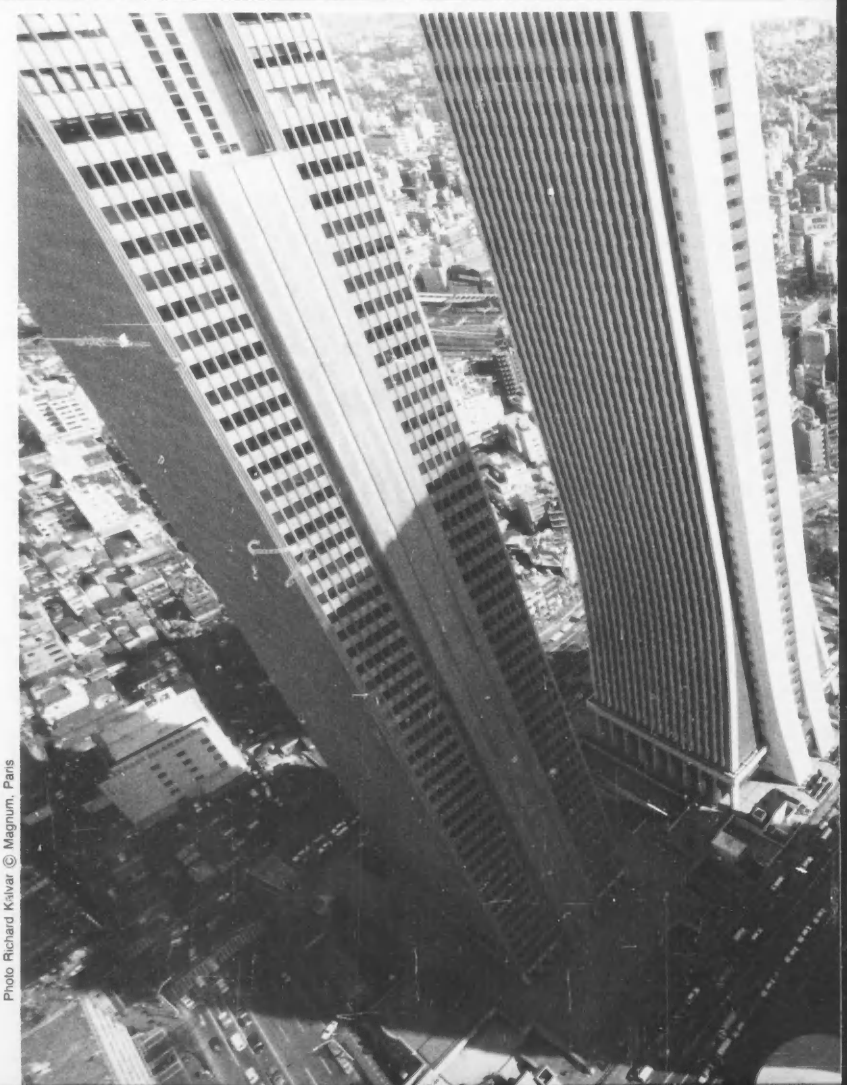


Photo Richard Kalvar © Magnum, Paris

Wilderness and sacred groves

All these forms of dwelling owe much to Buddhism, and through Buddhism (among other channels) to Chinese civilization. Nevertheless, the unique expression of the indigenous animist heritage lives on, in partnership with the Shintō religion. The holy places of Shintō range from a rock in a remote valley to a sanctuary in the middle of Tokyo, and from the bough of a tree to a sacred enclosure of several hectares: they are to be found on every scale throughout Japan. Yet all have one feature in common: they refer to nature, which they express both symbolically, through the mythology attaching to the divinities worshipped there, and ecologically, through their vegetation.

The basic model of a Shintō sanctuary *(jinja),* both in the towns and in the countryside, is a wooden building surrounded by trees. On the one hand, this sacred wood *(chinju-no-mori)* symbolizes the mountain forest *(yama),* in the depths of which is the fountain-head of divinity; the value attached to depths *(oku)* is also expressed in the archi-

tecture of religious buildings. On the other hand, it is an ecological representation of primeval nature, for since their vegetation must not be cut down, the *chinju-no-mori* have become relics of the forest of shining leaves which once covered the plains of Japan (except in the North-East).

It is true that the sacred woods have not been preserved as fully as they might have been. Many have been nibbled away by modern urban development. Nevertheless, in the heart of the biggest cities they still keep Japanese culture firmly rooted in the natural world which was there before towns existed.

The heart of nature

Despite its love of nature, Japanese society has been unable to prevent, in our time, a serious deterioration of its natural heritage, particularly from an aesthetic point of view. This development is only superficially a paradoxical one. Among its causes are the Japanese people's lack of interest in politics, in other words, in the principles governing the régime under which the deterioration in question took place. This is an attitude which, as we have already seen, expresses a very ancient and very deep-seated tendency in Japanese culture.

All the same, the deterioration of the environment has aroused local protest in the form of the so-called "residents' movements" *(jūmin undō)* which proliferated in the late 1960s and eventually succeeded in introducing strict legal measures for environmental protection. Since then, partly as a result of technological changes and the slow-down of the economy, less damage is being caused and there has been a corresponding slackening of activity in the residents' movements. The focus of interest has shifted towards amenities, which are seen mainly in terms of greenery. The Tokyo city authorities, for example, are currently implementing a programme to double the amount of green areas in twenty years. In addition to these ecological improvements to the urban setting, many inhabitants of Tokyo take out a symbolic passport to the wilderness by purchasing honorary citizenship in northern municipalities such as Hokkaido, which are thereby able to finance the preservation of their forests.

The theme of nature thus tends to distract attention from more specifically urban, and thus even political, problems, such as what is to be done with the large areas of public land in the middle of Tokyo, that are being auctioned off piecemeal to replenish public funds. The destiny of the heart of the city is clearly of little interest to the suburban commuters who, every evening, travel back in their millions to their little houses in a green setting.

A sense of place

The urban phenomenon is so closely bound up with the highest values of European society, such as democracy and civilization, that it is difficult for a European to imagine that towns can express other values, or even that such values can be expressed in other ways than by towns. However, these connotations are by no means universal: many societies (some of which originated in Europe itself) are untouched by them. Japan is one of these societies.

The material similarities between the ways in which human dwellings are clustered together in towns and cities throughout the world tend to disguise the fact that conurbations differ from one another just as human societies do.

Instead of confining ourselves to formal comparisons, and expatiating on the relative lack of public forums or political debate in Japanese towns and cities, it would be more profitable to remember the underlying propensities of the culture in question, and to see that the Japanese counterpart to the European public forum—the arena of political discourse, identifiable by its colonnades and belfries—may well be none other than the sacred grove—a place that offers a way back to primeval nature, typified by the trunks and foliage of ancient trees; and we should remember that, in both cases, the society in question is doing no more than giving urban expression to its own first and guiding principle: in one place, the Word; in the other, Nature. ■

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The changing home

Tradition and modernism in domestic architecture

by Marc Bourdier

FOR decades the traditional Japanese house has exercised a fascination on many architects, and today it gets plentiful coverage in interior decoration magazines and art publications.

By Western standards it is not a comfortable place to live in. It is cold in winter and the people who live in it sit on the bare floor on mats *(tatami)*. For the investor it lacks the reassuring durability of stone. Nevertheless, because of its design, method of construction and aesthetic philosophy, it is a rare example of a complete, complex system.

Because of the wood of which it is built and the subtle series of transitions between it and the outer world—the garden—it stands in close relation to nature. Because of its thatched roof, cob walls, and the fact that it is built on piles, it can stand temperatures of about 40° accompanied by over 80 per cent humidity in summer, and its flexible construction enables it to absorb earthquake tremors. With its sliding partitions it can be adapted to any occasion—two rooms can be converted into one by drawing back four paper doors or *fusuma*. It is the spatial expression of a form of social and family organization in which hierarchical relations between individuals are strictly governed.

But all this is becoming a thing of the past. After evolving gradually over many centuries, the traditional Japanese house is now scarcely more than a memory in the big cities like Tokyo and their dormitory suburbs. Profound and rapid changes in construction methods and the consequent appearance of new types of individual and collective dwelling have revolutionized traditional living habits since the Second World War.

There are many reasons for this change. It

Heavy modern furnishings and fittings seem an encumbrance in the traditional Japanese house with its characteristic simplicity and flexible use of space. The practice of allotting a specific function to each room and separating rooms with concrete walls instead of mobile screens makes the amount of living space seem smaller.

Photo Rick Smolan © Contact Press Images, Paris

Photo Michael Macintyre © ANA, Paris

The traditional Japanese house (above) is a fragile dwelling which blends into its natural surroundings. Its occupants can experience the rhythm of the changing seasons and feel the sense of "impermanence" which is fundamental to Buddhism. Translucent sliding outer panels diffuse light and open directly on to a garden which is a composition designed to be seen, like a picture, from inside the house.

is not due only to Western influence, although the latter is responsible for the appearance of the bed in 42 per cent of Japanese homes, where it coexists with the traditional bedding *(futon)* which is put away in a cupboard *(oshiire)* every morning after exposure to the sun. A bed takes up a lot of space in a small apartment (the average area of a Tokyo flat is 58 m²).

Chairs, which were not found in Japanese homes before the war, have also come from the West. Nowadays table and chairs of Western type can often be seen in one room and the traditional low table and cushions in another. This duality can be explained by the relatively low ceilings of mass-produced dwellings as well as by force of habit. The volume of a room is perceived differently depending on whether one is seated on the floor or on a chair. Likewise, more people can be accommodated on cushions around a low table than on chairs around a Western-style table.

Nevertheless, most of the changes in Japanese living habits are of local origin. Whereas in the past people would sleep, eat or study in the same room, in modern dwellings each room is assigned a single purpose. This is due to the concern for better hygiene which grew up in pre-war Japan and led to the idea that people should sleep and eat in different rooms.

The inventors of this idea expected that there would be a big increase in the surface area of mass-produced dwellings after the war. But they were wrong. Partly because of the concentration of the population in big cities, the average surface area of rented apartments is now 43 m². All the rooms are small and each has only one function. If they communicated with each other as in the past, their smallness would be tolerable. But the use of reinforced concrete in the construction of apartment blocks has brought an increase in the number of walls in the living area, instead of the mobile partitions found in the traditional wooden type of dwelling. Moreover, the new building code which came into force in the 1950s requires that small wooden houses be capable of resisting earthquake tremors and not merely absorbing them as before. Here again one of the technical solutions has been to increase the number of solid walls.

Nowadays Western visitors to a Japanese home will probably find their eyes drawn to certain typical features and habits which seem to have survived, such as taking off one's shoes in the hall and walking on *tatami* mats in certain rooms, or the traditional corner alcove *(tokonoma)*, which now accommodates the television set instead of the floral arrangement *(ikebana)* as in the past. Such "exotic" features hide the fact that these concrete dwellings, which are heated in winter and air-conditioned in summer, are a source of previously unknown inconveniences and, as recent surveys have shown, are a source of stress to people of rural origin who have been accustomed to a different way of life.

Japanese housing and life style may not have become completely Westernized, but they have undergone a considerable transformation. ■

MARC BOURDIER, *French architect, is a member of a team of specialists engaged on a Franco-Japanese co-operative research programme on the quality of the urban environment in Tokyo. He is the author of several published works, including "Housing Production and Living Conditions, the First Subsidized Housing in Japan, 1924-1942" and "The Problem of Urban Housing in Japan".*

A large foreigner in search of space

by James Kirkup

MOST Japanese subway and commuter trains have their seats in the form of long benches on each side of the carriage. They are quite comfortably upholstered in hard-wearing green, red or blue plush. I suspect that the reason for such seating arrangements is to allow as many people as possible to stand during the rush hours, which in the big cities seem to last all day long. People queue up quite docilely on the platforms facing the sign on the opposite platform, just above the tracks, indicating exactly where the train doors will open automatically: and Japanese trains always stop exactly in the correct place.

A crowd of rush-hour passengers being packed into a subway train by an attendant

Photo Richard Kalvar © Magnum, Paris

But as soon as the doors open, there is a general stampede to enter the cars and get a seat. Passengers who want to get off sometimes have difficulty in doing so, and have to fight their way out against the solid mass of those desperate to get on. Small children, perhaps trained by their parents, are expert queue-jumpers who insinuate themselves into the trains before less quick-footed grown-ups and bag whatever empty seats there may be. Nor do they intend to give them up to their elders and betters. Each carriage has a few seats marked "Silver Seats" ostensibly for Japan's rapidly-ageing silver-haired population, but these signs are never observed.

This kind of behaviour, in a people renowned for politeness, used to puzzle me. Where are the exquisite manners of the tea ceremony and the grand social occasion, the almost Quaker-like self-effacement of the audience at the Nō theatre or of the practitioners of Zen meditation? But now I understand that all this rushing and pushing to get the last vacant seat on the subway is a national characteristic owing its existence simply to the lack of space in Japan for each individual. A subway seat, to most Japanese, represents a bit of that precious space that has to be conquered and hung on to by hook or by crook: if you don't seize it, someone else will.

Japanese people have the enviable gift of being able to sleep anywhere, at any time of the day. One can observe this unique ability especially in trains: someone will grab a seat, fold his arms, lower his head and at once drift off into the Land of Nod. No one ever disturbs a sleeper, even though he may be taking up more space on the seat than an individual is entitled to. Quite often such sleepers abandon their heads on the convenient shoulders of the stranger sitting next to them: when this happens to me, I am very happy, for I consider it a privilege to support a sleeper's head in a land where foreigners are often kept at arm's length. Some young

Lack of space is a persistent problem for Japanese society and living quarters are often cramped. Right, photomontage of a modern prefabricated apartment block.

Photo René Burri © Magnum, Paris

people, not as shameless as the children sprawling on the seats, pretend to sleep in order to avoid giving up their hard-won space to some feeble old lady or gentleman hanging hopefully over them from the white plastic rings dangling like gymnastic equipment from the roof of the carriage.

But there is another, subtler reason why young people do not willingly give up their seats to the elderly and the infirm. On the rare occasions when I have seen a young man or woman do so, usually abruptly, without grace, the unusual action draws astonished looks from the other passengers—and no Japanese likes to attract attention. Moreover, the old lady to whom the seat is offered will not accept it with a simple bow or word of thanks: instead she will make quite a performance of it, bowing and smiling repeatedly at this now highly embarrassed youth and uttering a flow of very high-class expressions of gratitude and long formula phrases of noble-sounding politeness before allowing herself finally to accept the offer and settle herself, straight-backed, on the very edge of the seat, continuing to nod and smile at the young man who is trying to move as far away from her as possible in the packed train. If he cannot move, and is stuck in front of the beneficiary of his well-bred behaviour, the old lady may insist on carrying his sports bag or attaché case on her knees. Many a youth has got off the train at the next stop in order to escape such attentions from the delighted senior citizen, resolving, as he waits for the next train to his destination, never to give up his seat to anyone again.

Those who are unsuccessful in obtaining a seat try to obtain the next best thing—a steel pole, handle or strap to hold on to. The white plastic rings, often grubby with newsprint, are also expressions of desired territory, and some people insist on hanging on to two of them, one in each hand, in order to assert their territorial right to a modicum of personal space. And they hang on to their plastic rings to the very last moment, even after the train has stopped at their destination, when they finally decide reluctantly to let the ring go: I have often been struck sharply over the nose by one of these suddenly-abandoned rings as I follow its former possessor off the train.

The Japanese go on about their lack of space all the time. The unfortunate term "rabbit hutches" has been applied by Western critics to the exiguous space of houses and apartments in Japan, to the amusement of the Japanese, who believe there is a rabbit, not a man, in the moon. Space is at a premium because of the abnormally high price of available land for building, a price that has recently been reaching dizzying heights. Yet Western critics seem to forget that in the West, too, there are many people living in conditions worse than any rabbit hutch, living entire lives in a single hotel room or bed-sitter or caravan.

The Japanese at least make the very best of what little space they have in their houses. A six-mat *tatami* room can be made to look quite spacious if the only furniture in it is one small low table, and if the seats, in the form of five (never six) flat square cushions are neatly stacked in a corner. The only other objects in such a traditional room, still found in even the most modern "manshuns" or apartments, might be a hanging scroll and a flower arrangement. True luxury is the sense of uncluttered space.

Unfortunately, many houses and apartments now have several "Western-style" rooms with wooden, carpeted floors, and such rooms are usually overflowing with cumbersome Western furniture, pianos, organs, sideboards and all the latest labour-saving devices and electronic gadgets. Such rooms, with their furniture draped in antimacassars, look curiously Victorian in their un-Japanese clutter of bibelots and étagères and bird-cages. There is hardly space to swing a cat.

The Japanese are being urged to buy more Japanese products in order to reduce the very high level of their savings, help the languishing economy and regulate the balance of payments.

But they have no more room in which to put new purchases, unless they throw out perfectly good items that the latest products have made slightly out of date. Not far from the spacious apartment I, as an extra-large foreigner, am allowed to occupy, there is a small graveyard of used TV sets, washing machines, refrigerators, radios, computers and piles of other still quite usable junk cast out by this throw-away society desperate to find space for the never-ending flow of new products. Poor foreigners can often be seen scavenging among all this valuable rubbish, retrieving items for their own crowded apartments or for sale or barter in the second-hand shops that have at last begun to be popular.

My own three rooms, living room and kitchen contain only the minimum of modest furniture, but my space is awash with books, magazines and all the scribbled chaos of a poet's life. I have tried offering all my manuscripts and notebooks to Japanese university libraries, but they, too, are short of space and have trouble in accommodating even a fraction of the thousands of books and periodicals published in Japan every month. Ordinary household trash is collected twice a week, but one cannot put out anything bulky, so about once every ten days there is a special bottles-and-cans collection, all carefully sorted and graded.

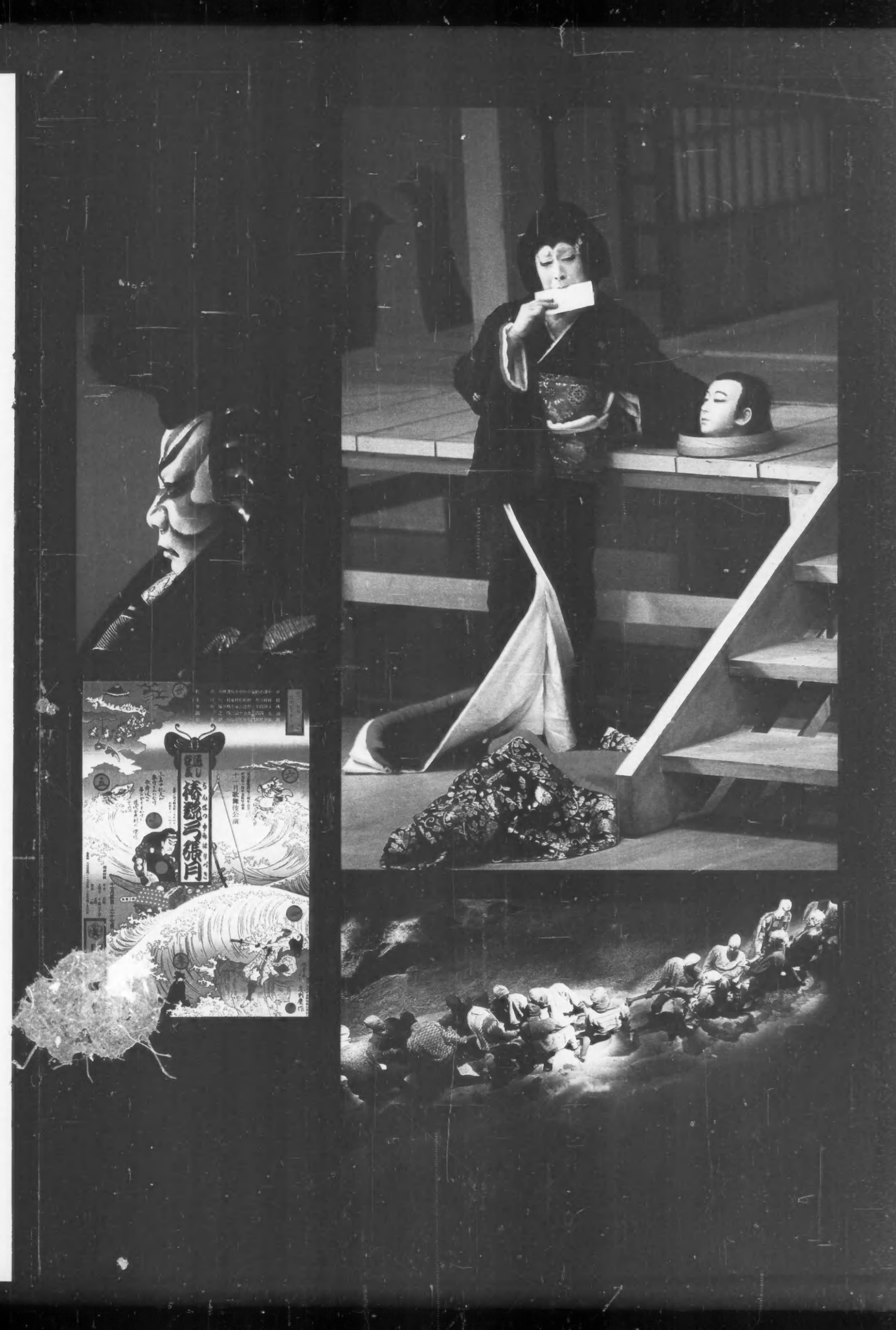
Traditional arts like the tea ceremony and flower arrangement are elegant and beautiful attempts to impose temporary order and spaciousness on chaos and crowding. And even in the rush hour I have often observed gracious manners on the packed trains, as when someone seeing that people are not sitting quite close enough together will stand in front of those seated and give an appealing little bow, whereupon the others will squeeze together to make room for another. I have learned this technique myself. But only too often, when a space has been made for me, I find I am too big for it—a somewhat embarrassing situation but one which appeals to the good-natured sense of humour of the Japanese. At such moments, I rather enjoy the lack of space: but it's awful if my neighbour kindly gets up to give me his own precious room on the bench. I can only bow my thanks and sit with lowered head on the edge of my seat until the next stop. ■

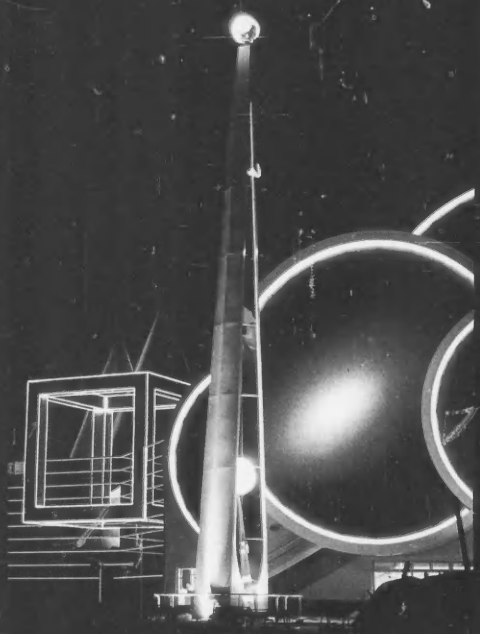
JAMES KIRKUP, *a British poet and translator who has lived in Japan since 1958, is professor of comparative literature at Kyōto University of Foreign Studies. He is the author of many prose works on Japan and the Far East and of many volumes of poetry, the most recent of which is* The Sense of the Visit *(Sceptre Press, 1984). Much of his work has been translated into Japanese. With the contemporary Japanese composer Minoru Miki he created the first kabuki opera,* An Actor's Revenge, *the most recent production of which was in April 1987 at Münster, Fed. Rep. of Germany.*

Colour page right

A form of Japanese popular theatre created at the beginning of the 17th century, kabuki *(from* ka *= singing,* bu *= dancing, and* ki *= acting) contains elements of theatre, opera and music hall. All the roles, including female roles, are taken by men. Poster below left is by a well-known Japanese graphic artist, Tadanori Yokoo (born 1936). It advertises a kabuki dramatization by Yukio Mishima of* Chinsetsu yumiharizuki (Crescent Moon: The Adventures of Tametomo) *an adventure tale by Bakin (1767-1848) performed in Tokyo in 1969. Top left: the hero of* Kagekiyo, *a kabuki play which tells of the struggle of a legendary 12th-century figure, Taira no Kagekiyo, against a mortal enemy of his family. Top right: a dramatic moment in* Ichinotani Futaba Gunki (Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani), *an 18th-century kabuki tragedy. To control his feelings after his son's death, Sagami grips a piece of paper between his teeth. Bottom right: presentation of men's winter fashions by the leading Japanese couturier Issey Miyake, Tokyo, 1984, took place in a setting designed by his art director, Tomio Mori.*

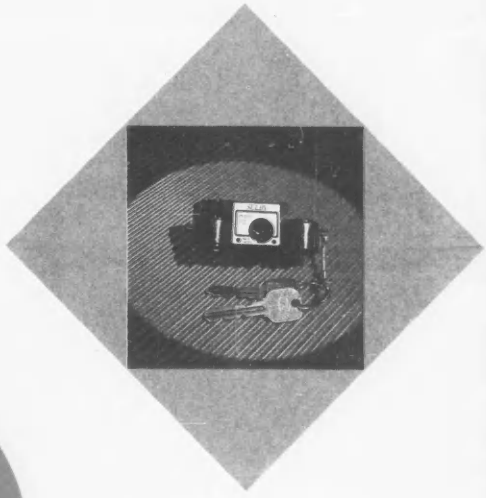
Photo © Tadanori Yokoo, Tokyo
Photo Burt Glinn © Magnum, Paris
Photo Mike Yamashita © Rapho, Paris
Photo Claude Charlier © ANA, Paris

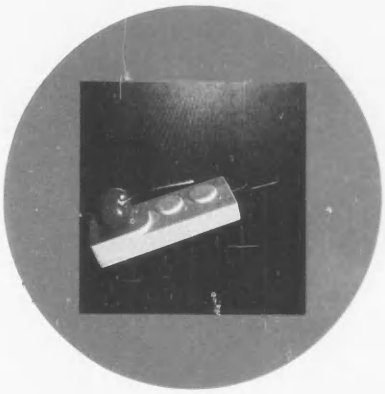




The high tech explosion

Technological ingenuity, Japan's home-grown raw material





Photos Andreas Dannenburg © Cosmos, Paris

Three examples of Japanese mastery of miniaturization technology. Left to right: an electric razor, a transistor radio and a camera which also serves as a key-ring.

by Shigeru Kimura

IT was not until the 1980s that the high level of Japanese science and technology began to attract worldwide attention. Up till then, the United States could boast of its supremacy in these fields; but at the beginning of the present decade Japan overtook the USA in several fields: steel-making, cars, numerically controlled machine tools, industrial robots and integrated circuits.

Imitation and creativity

How is it that Japan has made such rapid technological advances? Various reasons can be adduced, the first of which is the determined adoption by Japanese engineers of the latest technology available in other countries.

Dr. Masaru Ibuka, founder of the Sony Corporation, is a case in point. When he was in the United States in 1952, looking for ideas that might lead to new developments in technology, he heard that Western Electric, Inc. had decided to allow other companies to make use of its transistor patent. Dr. Ibuka at once began negotiating with Western Electric with a view to obtaining the right to use the information disclosed in this patent. At that time his company was very small and little known. Its achievements in developing tape recorder technology were highly thought of, however, and no obstacle was raised to his acquiring the right to use the patent in question.

During the negotiations, the Western Electric executives asked him what he proposed to use transistors for. When he replied that he wanted to see if he could use them to make a miniature radio, the Americans advised him to give up the idea: the transistors would be expensive to produce, and even if he were to succeed in making a radio with them, they assured him, it would be no match for the ordinary valve radio, either technically or cost-wise, so he would be wasting his time.

Undeterred, Dr. Ibuka returned to Tokyo and set to work with a small team of researchers to develop his idea in a laboratory that was little more than a shack. Two years later, in the winter of 1954, the sound of the first transistor radio was heard. It was badly affected by static, but at least it was a radio. This transistor radio was subsequently exported all over the world, and became very popular.

Until 1949, the metal teeth of the zip fasteners made by Yoshida Kōgyō Ltd. (YKK), today the world's biggest zip manufacturer, were implanted in their cloth edging by hand. In 1950, however, the company imported an automatic implanting machine from the United States. The machine was secondhand, but Company

Colour page left

Top: Japan's MOS1 maritime observation satellite which was successfully launched in February 1986 by the Japanese Space Agency. Centre: using cubes, spheres, triangles and other geometric forms, Japanese architects created a science fiction setting in their designs for the pavilions at Expo '85, an international exhibition held in 1985 at Tsukuba, 50 km north of Tokyo. Over 20 million people visited the exhibition, the main theme of which was "Dwellings and Surroundings—Science and Technology for Man at Home". Bottom: Japanese technicians purify silicon, thin wafers of which are the starting point for the manufacture of integrated circuits used in many types of electronic systems.

Photo James Griffiths © Magnum, Paris
Photo Keisuke Kumagai © Rapho, Paris
Photo Claude Charlier © ANA, Paris

Photo Richard Kalvar © Magnum, Paris

Japan, which today produces over half the world's output of computer microchips, has an outstandingly successful electronics industry. Above, computer components in an "electronic bazaar" in Tokyo's Akihabara district, which specializes in the sale of electrical and electronic equipment through outlets ranging from market stalls to chain-stores employing over 1,000 people.

President Tadao Yoshida took it apart, studied it in detail, and added a series of improvements, till finally he succeeded in producing a version which was far superior to the original. The company reached its present position as the world's number one producer of zip fasteners in 1960.

It is often said that the Japanese are very good at imitating other people's ideas, but short on originality or creativity. But there is no doubt that without originality—without creative thinking—neither that first transistor radio nor the improved zip fastener machine would have been possible. After the Second World War, Japan found itself lagging behind in science and technology. By first assimilating scientific and technological advances that had been made overseas, and then adding its own unique ideas to the expertise thus acquired, Japan was able to produce finished products of outstanding quality, and thereby to win a high reputation in world markets.

Japanese originality can also be seen in the small home video recorders, now found throughout the world, that were developed by two Japanese companies, and in the fact that 98 per cent of the facsimile machines in use worldwide were made in Japan.

Catching up—the first priority

Until about a century ago, Japan was no more than an underdeveloped country in the remote Far East. In science and technology, it lagged far behind Europe and the United States.

The Japanese government of that time sent many students to study in Europe and in the United States. Between 1868 and 1874, some 550 of these students went overseas; a considerable number, in an age in which Atlantic and Pacific crossings were made in small ships.

The government also invited many scientists and technical experts from other countries to teach in Japan. Some of these teachers, who came from the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Germany, The Netherlands, Switzerland and Italy, were more highly paid than Japanese Cabinet Ministers. Between 1868 and 1889 2,299 foreigners were thus employed.

In addition, the government very quickly recognized the importance of education, and began to introduce a system of universal education as early as 1871. While only 35 per cent of children of eligible age were attending school in 1875, by 1905 the rate had risen to 96 per cent.

Thanks to a combination of traditional values, talent and government policies, by the 1920s Japanese science and technology had already caught up with Europe and the United States in several fields. The Japanese had, for example, discovered new pathogens and established the theory of mesons.[1]

In the Second World War, however, the fruits of this scientific and technological research were lost. Once again Japan had no alternative but to start from scratch and learn from other countries. Thirty-five years after the War, the Japanese led the world in a number of areas.

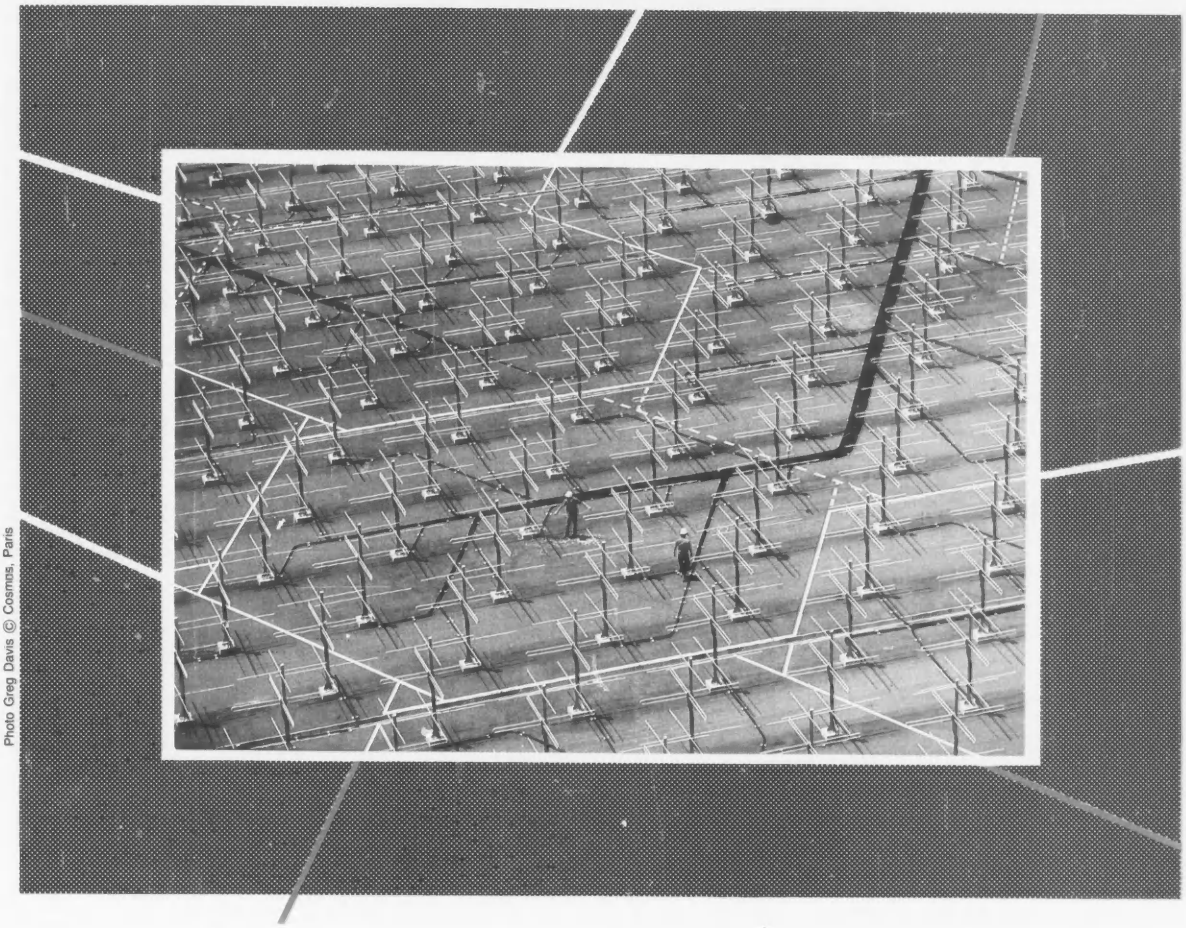


Photo Greg Davis © Cosmos, Paris

Japan's MU radar systems are among the world's most advanced technological equipment for studying the Earth's upper atmosphere. A very large MU installation has been developed at Shigaraki (province of Gifu, on Honshu island) by Kyōto University's Centre for Studies of Super High Atmospheric Electric Waves, in order to carry out meteorological studies and other scientific research. The facility has 475 3.5-metre-high antennae standing 4.5 metres apart in hexagonal groups (above).

The problems ahead

But as the 1980s draw to a close, the skies are not cloudless for Japanese science and technology.

In 1957 Japan became the world's leading shipbuilding nation, and maintained this lead for many years. But recently the Republic of Korea has mastered the most advanced technology in this field, and can now build excellent ships more cheaply than Japan, with the result that Japanese shipbuilding companies are facing hard times.

In steel manufacturing technology too, the Republic of Korea has caught up with Japan. Lower Korean wages mean that Japan cannot compete with Korean manufacturing costs, and Japanese steelmakers are being forced to curtail their operations.

The Republic of Korea has also introduced car production technology from Japan, and is now manufacturing cars which are as good as, but cheaper than, the Japanese product.

If this trend continues, it may well be that countries such as the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore will overtake Japan in the 1990s, just as Japan has been overtaking the United States in the 1980s.

The people of a country such as the United States, rich in natural resources, are not likely to be pushed into extremes of poverty by technological decline. But Japan has virtually no oil, coal, or any other raw materials of its own. Until now the Japanese have imported raw materials from overseas, and used their technological capacity to transform them into manufactured goods for export. With their export revenues they purchase essential commodities such as oil, food and animal fodder.

Japan cannot abandon this trade in manufactured goods all at once. No effort must be spared in formulating research and development programmes relating to the manufacture of high tech products that cannot be easily imitated by competitor countries.

The Japanese government is encouraging original inventions and discoveries through such initiatives as its *Project for the Promotion of Creative Science and Technology*, and it is fortunate that Japanese parents are so closely concerned with their children's education. The average level of education certainly compares favourably with that of other countries.

There is no doubt that Japan will continue to produce top level scientists and technologists whose work will help to improve the lives of many people throughout the world. ■

1. Elementary particles. *Editor*

SHIGERU KIMURA *is assistant administrator of a satellite broadcasting company,* Eisei Channeru. *A specialist in the history of science, he was formerly a journalist with the Tokyo daily* Asahi Shimbun, *where he was head of the scientific department and director of research. He is the author of several published works, including* Japan's Science Edge: How the Cult of Anti-Science Thought in America Limits U.S. Scientific and Technological Progress, *University Press of America, USA, 1985.*

A cultural explanation for Japan's economic performance

Photo © Musée Guimet, Paris

Confucius and capitalism

by Michio Morishima

WHY did "modern capitalism" not emerge in other times and other places than modern western Europe? The German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) believed that modern capitalism was not automatically produced by the development of science and technology, and that behind its emergence lay also the emergence of rational, anti-traditional ways of thinking among human agents. Weber asked why there had been such an enormous historical difference in this respect between the Orient and the Occident. To answer this question he made a magnificent comparative study covering Europe, the Middle East, India and China, and concluded that there were religious factors in the modern West which favoured the rise of capitalism, while such factors were absent in other civilizations.

'Sublimated empiricism'

Weber considered that Confucianism, like Protestantism, is a highly rational religion, but that there is an important difference between them. "As against the accommodation to the world found in Confucianism we find in Puritanism [or Protestantism] the task of reorganizing the world in a rational manner."[1] Puritanism alone fostered modern natural science and promoted the spirit of capitalism. In China, not only were natural science and technology absent, but also natural law and formal logic. China, therefore, failed to achieve a shift from empirical to rational techniques. "Everything remained at the level of sublimated empiricism."[1]

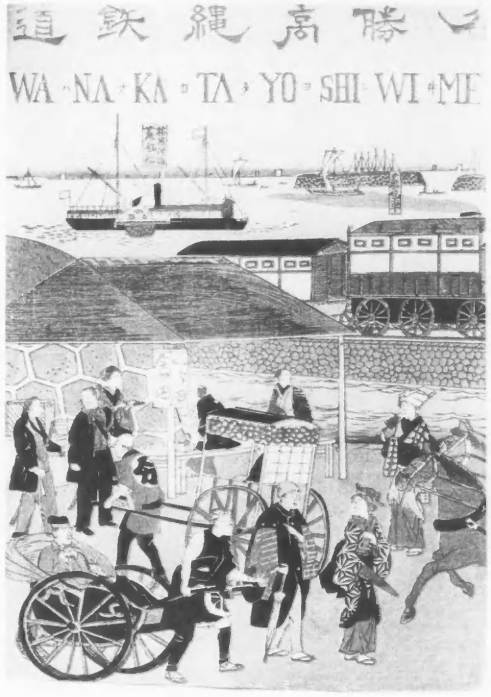
Weber's comparative study of world religions may be regarded, as he himself perceived, as a massive integrated attempt to clarify the cultural background, spiritual backbone and materialistic consequences of Western civilization. From a different point of view, however, it may be seen as part of the overall task of establishing the proposition that the economic performances of various peoples or nations are unstable and influenced by the slightest change in their ethos. Only that part concerning Christianity was completed by Weber himself, who left unfinished the parts relating to other religions such as Confucianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

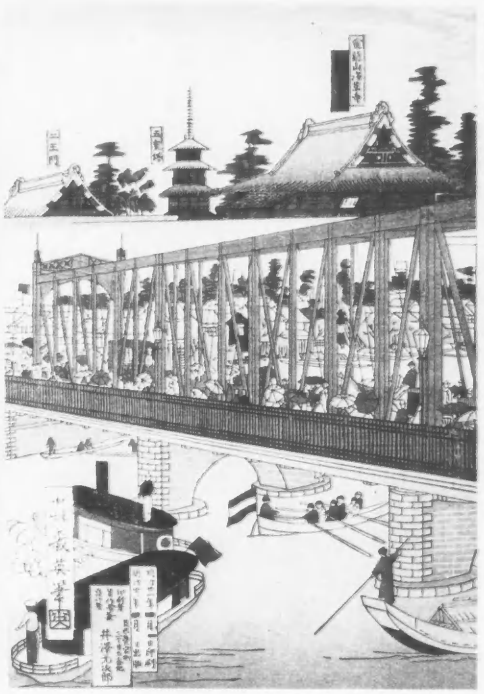
The instability (or knife-edge) thesis is based on the observation that Catholics and Protestants, who share the same Bible but interpret it differently, are significantly different in their modes of worldly behaviour. Weber sees the essential disagreement between the two as lying in the fact that Protestantism removes the barrier between layman and clergy by discarding the division of Christian ethical precepts into *praecepta* and *consilia*, while Catholicism sticks to this dualism. For all Protestant denominations "the only way of living acceptable to God was not to outbid worldly morality by monastic asceticism, but solely through the fulfilment of the obligations imposed upon the individual by his position in the world. That was his calling."[1]

Rationalism and austerity

The Protestant interpretation of the Bible thus produces the concept of a job as a "calling", a task set by God, by which secular life (and hence economic activity)

1. Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* ("Collected Writings on Religious Sociology", 1920)





Photos Louis Frédéric © Rapho, Paris

is connected with the will of God. A job becomes a duty, and this kind of outlook on work is, at least at some stage of history, necessary for the establishment of the capitalist régime and its take-off for economic growth. The Protestant Reformation was a breakthrough by which asceticism, hitherto confined to the monasteries, was released into the outside secular world. People began to act ascetically and rationally. The rational utilization of capital was carried out and the rational capitalistic organization of labour was implemented. Protestantism thus contributed to (or is congruent with) the establishment of an efficient economic system.

No such instability argument concerning China, India and Japan is found in Weber's works. He only concludes that neither Confucianism, Hinduism nor Buddhism is suitable for promoting the spirit of capitalism; each contains some significant factors which militate against the emergence of capitalism. He comes nearest to the knife-edge proposition when he says: "The Chinese in all probability would be quite capable, probably as much as if not more capable than the Japanese, of assimilating capitalism, which has technologically and economically been fully developed in the modern culture area."[1] In my book *Why has Japan 'Succeeded'?*, however, I have carried out further investigation into the subject and developed, for the sake of comparison between China and Japan, an argument which is parallel to the one which Weber made with respect to Catholicism and Protestantism.

In my opinion, between China and Japan there is *prima facie* no significant differ-

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Photo J.F. Yee © Metropolitan Museum Photograph Studio, New York

The Meiji Restoration in 1868 and the subsequent abolition of feudalism brought Japan into the modern age through a rapid programme of industrialization and development. Within a few decades Japan could compete with the Western powers in economic and military terms. The three 19th-century Japanese prints above give some idea of the extent of the change: left, view of a street in Edo (now Tokyo) in the early 1800s, by the great master of the woodblock print, Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), depicts a town untouched by modern change. The two prints on this page, "The Train from Takanawa to Tokyo" (c. 1875) and "The Azumabashi Bridge" (1887), are both by Hiroshige III (a pupil of Hiroshige) and show the inroads being made by industrialization and Westernization on the traditional Japanese scene. The art of the Japanese print reached perfection in the 18th and 19th centuries in the work of such great artists as Kitagawa Utamaro, Katsushika Hokusai (creator of the famous "Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji"), and Hiroshige himself. Japanese prints became very popular in 19th-century Europe and exercised great influence on the Impressionists and other painters.

One possible explanation for Japanese economic success may lie in the specific Japanese interpretation of Confucian principles. Left, an 18th-century ivory netsuke, *a richly carved small toggle used to attach objects to the sash of a kimono. It depicts General Kuan-yü, a Chinese hero (2nd and 3rd centuries AD) considered by the Japanese to embody such Confucian virtues as courage and loyalty. The* netsuke *art form flourished in Japan during the Edo period (1603-1867).*

Photo Marc Riboud © Magnum, Paris

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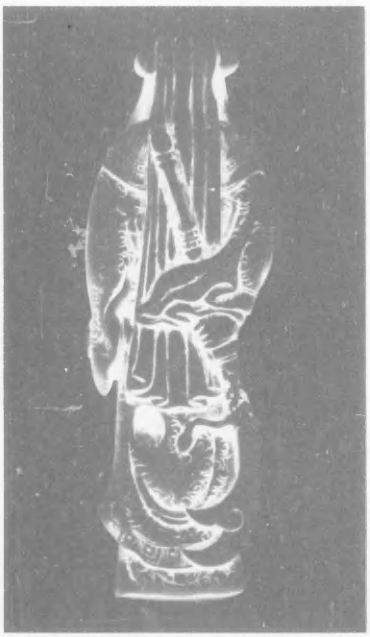
ence in ideological layout. They are primarily Confucianist countries. Buddhism came to Japan not directly from India but always through China, and Shintō which is generally thought of as a religion truly indigenous to Japan, was, even in its ancient primitive form, deeply influenced by Chinese Taoism. Indeed it has been suggested that Shintō might even be nothing other than a Japanese version of Taoism. In spite of this, Japan succeeded in easily assimilating modern capitalism, while China continued to be exploited by imperialists from the West and Japan. This paradoxical situation can be resolved only by viewing it in the light of instability theory.

Company loyalty, a Confucian virtue

It is noticeable that whereas the Chinese interpretation of Confucius' doctrines is individualistic and humanistic, the Japanese version is nationalistic and militaristic. This contrast arguably has existed ever since Confucianism first came to Japan in about the sixth century. This is not surprising because the Japanese have suffered at all times from a sense of inferiority vis-à-vis the powerful Chinese empire, leading them to be, throughout their history, closely banded together and aggressive.[2] After two centuries of isolation which lasted until 1859, Japan came under pressure from the West. In this crisis the intelligentsia, who had been educated in the Japanese-Confucian manner, succeeded in unifying the country and finally established a new, powerful modern government. A nationalist-capitalist economy was eventually established, based on a seniority system, lifetime employment, the loyalty of employees to their company, and the share-holding system, which fully suits the ethos of Japanese Confucianism.[2]

For the establishment of modern Western-style capitalism, there are two preconditions: the nation-State and the civil society. For the capitalist mode of economic behaviour to prevail, an administrative organization must be established, which secures the continuance of the régime. There must be a strong government which enforces rational law in order to enable each member of society to calculate the consequences of his activity objectively and quantitatively. The government must have professional bureaucrats, administrative, judicial and military.[3] It is very much due to the nationalistic Japanese form of Confucianism that Japan, which had been marked by many class and regional divisions, was easily unified into a nation in a relatively short period of about twenty years, although there were obviously other favourable factors, such as insularity, Japan's awareness that the Philippines had fallen into the hands of Spain and that China was under constant attack from Western countries. Whatever the reasons, by 1890 Japan already had a powerful modern government with officials recruited from among ex-samurai and new university graduates.



It was, however, very difficult for Japan to fulfil the other precondition for capitalism, the establishment of a civil society. In contrast to Christianity, according to which everyone is equal in the sight of God, Confucianism promotes a collectivist ethic and the ethics of functional role expectation,[4] both of which maintain and strengthen the hierarchical character of the society. Therefore, the elements of a civil society were not well developed in Meiji Japan, and it is evident that this strong nation with its weak civil society was not suited for competitive capitalism of the Western type. It created a different type of production system,[4] though this can be, and is, included in the broad category of capitalism. In this economy, the "invisible hand" is more visible, since the government always takes the initiative and plays the role of helmsman of the economy. Efficiency has been established by collaboration rather than competition, and the idea of class antagonism has not been widespread among trade unionists.

The rise of 'Confucian capitalism' in the East

We may say that by virtue of the emergence of Japan, capitalism ceased to be monochromatic. Moreover, as the capital-

2. Michio Morishima, op. cit., 1982
3. Max Weber, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Abriss der universalen Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 1927 (*General Economic History*, tr. F.H. Knight)
4. J. Hirschmeier and T. Yui, *The Development of Japanese Business 1600-1973*, 1975
5. J.A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 1943

Photo Van der Drift © SIPA, Japan

Company loyalty, one of the pillars of Japan's social consensus, does not prevent employees from defending their interests, sometimes vigorously, in negotiations with their employers. The sense of "belonging" to a company is reinforced by the widespread ringi *system, in which written proposals submitted from below are examined by senior executives who take the final decisions. Left, trade union and management representatives of a large Japanese photographic materials company at the negotiating table.*

The integration of employees into a company is encouraged by working relationships based on confidence and on the conception of the company as a "big family". Communal holidays and outings are organized such as the picnic in the park at cherry-blossom time, right. Each year in early April, the Japanese press and television give daily coverage to the northward advance of the "blossom front".

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ism of the West, which may be called Protestant capitalism, declines because of its very achievements, its very success, as the US economist and sociologist Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950) has pointed out,[5] so the rise of Confucian capitalism in the East becomes more apparent. The attainment of an economic optimum via individualistic economic competition, which is said to be the most important *raison d'être* of the free enterprise system, is neither the main purpose nor the prime function of the Japanese economy. In this context, collaboration between workers for the benefit of the firm is a more important subject for analysis than competition among workers vis-à-vis the firm. In Japanese society, competition prevails, not so much among adults, but mainly among children, who are selected and allocated to various firms according to the diplomas they have received in the educational rat race. Once they have been allocated to a firm, it is very difficult for them to move, especially from a small firm to a big one.

In addition, within Japanese society there is a wide gulf, in wages, fringe benefits, productivity, risks and profits, between big business and the small business-subcontractor sector. Compared with Western firms Japanese big business operates in a very bureaucratic way, in accordance with the *ringi* system ("proposal submission from below and deliberation at the top") instead of Western planning and decision-making by top management. Moreover, newly industrialized countries such as the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore are all dominated by Confucianism. For the analysis of these new capitalist societies, a new economic model emphasizing collaboration, group consciousness and nationalism should be formulated.

These countries have developed by penetrating foreign markets, and home demand is not very important for their economic growth. Even for Japan, which has a fairly large domestic market, domestic demand is not the main motive force behind development. The failure of a civil society to develop is thus not a serious handicap to economic growth in these countries. It was possible for them to achieve economic expansion despite poor home demand and to embark on a forced march of rapid growth to catch up with the West. ■

MICHIO MORISHIMA, *Japanese economist, has been Sir John Hicks Professor of Economics at the London School of Economics since 1984. The ideas presented in this article are discussed in greater detail in his book* Why has Japan 'Succeeded'? Western Technology and the Japanese Ethos, *Cambridge University Press, UK, 1982.*

Photo Robert Wallis © JB Pictures, Cosmos, Paris

Although Japan has a substantial domestic market, its industrial growth has been primarily sustained by exports. Right, cars for export ready to be loaded aboard ship.

The Japanese and Western music

Photo Louis Frédéric © Rapho, Paris

by Luisa Futoransky

Western classical music is highly popular in Japan today, and leading Japanese exponents such as the celebrated conductor Seiji Ozawa often top the bill at concert halls all over the world. This enthusiasm can be traced back over a century to the Meiji Restoration, which marked the opening of Japan to the West. Above, a Japanese print produced in 1887 by Kanenobo depicts young people dressed in European style taking a singing lesson.

UNTIL recently, one of the many disparaging clichés used by critics when speaking of the appearance of Japanese artists in the front ranks of the world art scene, was that they were "imitators". They forgot that, to the Japanese, the work of Western artists often seems to suffer from a lack of maturity and to be contaminated with the virus of excessive originality.

In Shintō, a religion which still has considerable influence on everyday life in Japan, there is no clear-cut distinction between the divine and the human, which are linked by a principle of continuous animistic generation. In the words of the Japanese composer and musicologist Akira Tamba, "The living man's god is his deceased ancestor and, when he dies, he in turn will become the protective deity of his descendants." It is easy to appreciate, therefore, that Japanese artists do not subscribe to the idea of individual intellectual ownership with which Western creative artists are sometimes obsessed. Masters of traditional Japanese music, painters, calligraphers and actors all share the knowledge which they have acquired and developed throughout their lives with their pupils who, in turn, hand down this common stock of culture to their own successors ...

However relevant they may be, these observations are not sufficient in themselves to explain why Japan, after the terrible turning-point in history represented

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'Living National Treasures'

Each country has its own way of paying tribute to those who enshrine its culture, and Japan is no exception. The country honours its most outstanding living artists and craftsmen by conferring on them the title of "bearers of intangible and important cultural properties". Recipients of the honour are granted an annual allowance to enable them to work, exhibit and transmit their arts and skills to young apprentices. They are venerated and known affectionately as Ningen Kokuhō, 'Living National Treasures". Five of them are shown here. (1) Fumiko Yonekawa is the leading exponent of the koto, *a kind of zither originally found in China. The instrument is over 2 metres long and has 13 strings made of spun silk or nylon. (2) Toyozo Arakawa, one of Japan's most celebrated craftsmen, has revived ancient pottery techniques and creates magnificent ceramics on his farm deep in the countryside. (3) Kako Moriguchi has been making beautiful kimonos for the last 50 years using dyes and techniques dating from the 17th century. It may take up to 6 months to make a kimono. (4) Eishirō Abe is one of the few surviving Japanese masters of the 1,300-year-old art of making paper by hand. He works alone at home, collecting the wood he uses as raw material and personally supervising the kiln. (5) Lacquerwork is the speciality of Gonroke Matsudo. He uses powdered gold sprinkled from a flute-like tool, the* tsu-tsu, *as well as the shells of quails' eggs. When decorating a box with floral motifs, he may use up to 650 shells.*

Photos Jacobi © Stern Lynx, Paris

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The shamisen *(below), a 3-stringed plucked lute, is a traditional instrument which is often used to accompany the* koto, *or zither. Although the passion for Western music persists, recent years have seen a revival of interest in Japan's traditional music. This has stimulated the production of typical Japanese instruments such as the* shakuhachi *(bamboo flute), the* koto *and the* shamisen. *More and more Japanese children are learning to play these instruments.*

Photo F. Huguier © Vu, Paris

by Hiroshima and the end of the Second World War, having started virtually from scratch as far as Western music is concerned, should have become the leading manufacturer of top-quality musical instruments; nor why the Japanese have become increasingly involved in the entertainment business and popular music; nor why, in classical music, Japanese instrumentalists, conductors and soloists should have come to occupy a leading place in the world's concert halls.

There can be no doubt that Japan has superimposed European ways on its own models, especially in the arts and in education. The reasons for this are bound up with sociology, philosophy and cultural policy, and lie beyond the scope of this article. What is clear, however, is that Western music has gained such a foothold that in popular parlance it has become synonymous with "music" in general. As a result, when the Japanese wish to refer to traditional music, they feel compelled to add the word "Japanese", in order to avoid misunderstandings.

This does not mean that the practice of traditional music and interest in it have disappeared altogether. Following a period of apparent eclipse at the end of the 1960s, as a result of the craze for jazz, rock and other musical forms which were taking the world by storm, the study of traditional instruments such as the *shakuhachi*, the *koto* and the *shamisen* has been steadily gaining ground in recent years, as is borne out by the number of such instruments being manufactured and sold. However, in terms of public concerts and other events, traditional Japanese music accounts for no more than 10 per cent of musical activities in Japan, although it should not be forgotten that such music has always been "semi-public" in the sense that it is primarily based on the close relationship between master and pupils and that traditional concerts are usually attended by groups of friends and connoisseurs. Unlike other cultural events, they attract a faithful following which does not need to be prodded by advertising, and is not a prey to the vicissitudes of fashion.

Any attempt to study the interest aroused by music in Japan would be incomplete if no allowance was made for the leading role played by women. Although this phenomenon is not confined to Japan, it is an acknowledged fact that, in the middle and upper-middle classes, the study of music used to, and to some extent still does today, bring social prestige. Japanese custom required young women of marriageable age to round off their education by taking lessons in flower arrangement, the tea ceremony, calligraphy or traditional dancing, or else by learning to play a traditional instrument. This formed the beginning of a close relationship between master and pupil which lasted for the rest of the master's life.

With the increasingly rapid pace of Westernization in the 1950s, more and more people began to learn to play the piano, violin or harp. However, the surprising thing was that young people were not content with occasional private lessons. The taste and passion for music assumed such proportions that veritable musical universities began to flourish. Today, Japan has about 150 institutions, including conservatoires, academies, universities and US-style colleges offering high-quality musical instruction. Some of them are vast institutions with their own nursery schools, orchestras, opera groups, summer camps, and primary and secondary schools.

Statistics recently published show that some 10,000 young people with higher-grade diplomas, roughly 90 per cent of them women, enter the music market every year. Some of them become teachers at the universities where they themselves studied; many others teach in small

local conservatoires or simply pass on their love of music to their children. However, more and more of them are keen on pursuing their studies in the leading European centres in the hope of launching an international career. Rising living standards have enabled an increasing number of Japanese families to send their children to study in Europe, where school fees are often much lower than in Japan. More than 300 Japanese pupils are studying music or singing in Vienna alone.

The proverbial Japanese qualities of consistency, hard work and constant intellectual curiosity, coupled with submissiveness to one's teachers, also help to explain this phenomenal musical success. It should come as no surprise that in the Federal Republic of Germany, for example, there are currently more than 250 Japanese musicians occupying permanent posts in orchestras.

Quite apart from the undoubted quality of Japanese artists, one of the reasons for the number of Japanese on the international orchestral and operatic scene lies in the shortcomings of Japan's cultural infrastructure which is unable to absorb the large number of good professionals coming onto the market. There are few regular orchestras and only two or three of them are subsidized by local municipalities.

Until only very recently, plans for organizing a national opera company had not materialized. Owing to the very high cost of staging opera, it is understandable that such an outstanding opera group as *Nikikai*, in addition to depending on private sponsorship, should have three casts for each production. For the right to take part, each member of the company is required to sell a large number of tickets. Hence, there are obviously good reasons why talented young people should compete fiercely for a place on the international scene. Yet again the old adage that "no man is a prophet in his own country" is shown to be valid the world over.

I shall let the Japanese musicologist Mamoru Watanabe have the last word on the Japanese passion for Western music. In one of his books on the subject, he indulges in an ironical jest when he asks: "Why do the Japanese like European music? ... Why shouldn't we? It is beautiful music and it is natural for us to like it."■

LUISA FUTORANSKY, *Argentine writer, edited and presented a Spanish-language radio programme for the international service of NHK, the Japanese nation-wide broadcasting company, between 1976 and 1980, when she also taught opera at the Tokyo music academy* Musashino Ongaku Daigaku. *Among her recent publications are a novel,* De P a Pa *(1986), and a volume of poetry,* La sanguina *(1987).*

Photo © Max Tessier Collection

Shōhei Ōoka (born 1909) first became known as a writer through works such as Furyo-ki *(1948;* Prisoner of War, *1967), which were based on his wartime experiences. He is also the author of essays and novels, notably* Kaei *(1958-59) a tenderly-drawn portrait of a woman. In* Yōnen *(1973; "Childhood Years") and* Shonen *(1975; "Years of Youth"), he has written about his early life with his characteristically direct style and sharp sense of observation. Above, a scene from Kon Ichikawa's film* Nobi *(1959;* Fires on the Plain*) adapted from a short story with the same title (1953), in which Ōoka denounces the horrors of war.*

Home thoughts from abroad

A Japanese writer in Paris reflects on his country's postwar literature

by Tokuyoshi Hiraoka

THERE is a subtle and unexpected pleasure to be derived from reading the literature of one's homeland while in Paris, a cosmopolitan city thousands of kilometres from Japan, surrounded by people of another culture, hearing only a foreign language and reading only newspapers written in that language. From this perspective, Japanese writing seems mildly exotic, remote in time as well as in space, and for that very reason has a striking if paradoxical freshness. Distance brings a certain detachment. Yet it is after all the literature of one's own country, and a feeling of frustration is unavoidable, combined with relief at not being involved—a combination of responses not easy to explain.

Reading the same books in Tokyo, one immediately pictures each writer's face, hears his tone of voice, conjures up his distinctive gait, the idiosyncrasies of his speech or his drinking habits, not to mention the gossip that surrounds him, and the part that his work has played in one's life. His writing comes across as the voice of a fellow-inhabitant of a familiar world. Here in Paris, however, this "aura" is swept away, or filtered out, and only the voice of the writing is heard, like a call from another world.

Take the following extract from a piece by Yutaka Haniya in an issue of the journal *Bungakukai* ("Literary World"), which has just reached me.

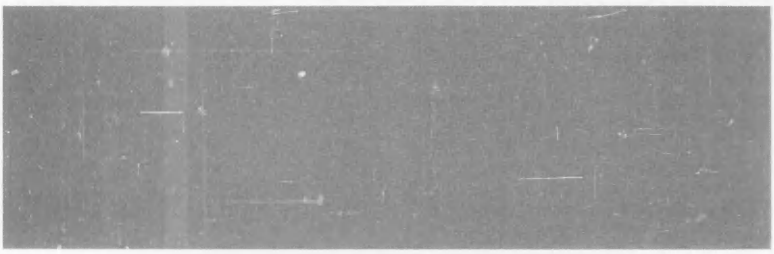
"If we really penetrate into and concentrate on those of his masterpieces now available to us, they will not yield up their astonishing series of intellectual revelations, which are linked together like the model built by Watson and Crick to represent the "double helix" structure of DNA—and we will never get out of the maze of his books until we lift our mental awareness to the point where we unconsciously find ourselves climbing step by step to heights within ourselves whose existence we had never suspected."

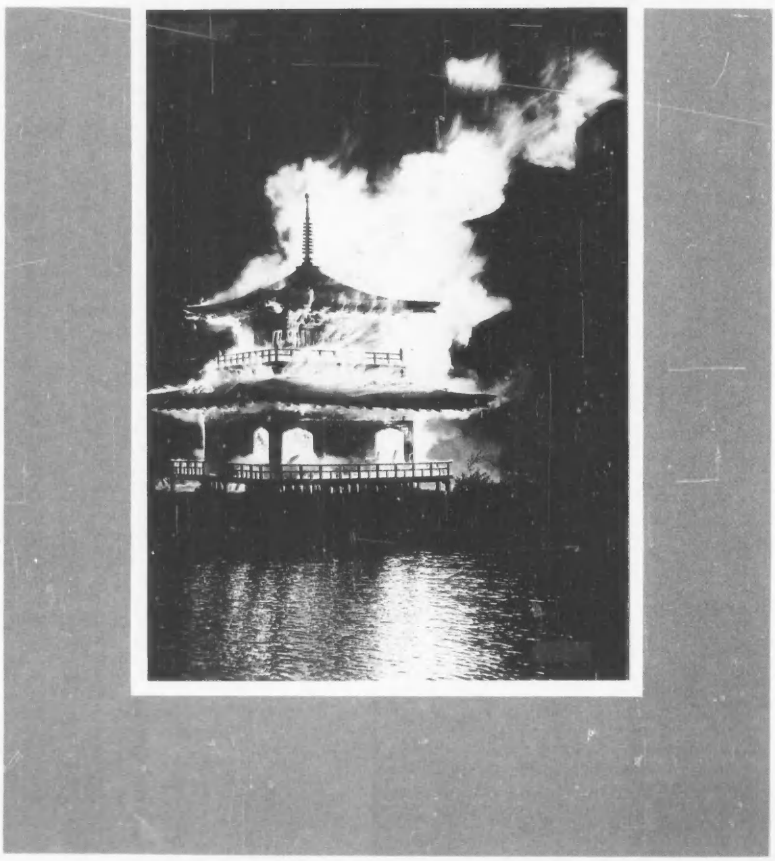
These lines are from an essay in memory of that unorthodox genius, Tatsuhiko Shibusawa, who died not long ago. How strikingly applicable they are to Haniya himself, who began his *Shirei* ("The Spirits of the Dead"), a monument to waking delusions, just after the Second World War, and forty years later is still painstakingly at work on this same novel. But that is not all. What is important is the unique "voice".

Photo © Hiroko Govaers

that characterizes not merely Haniya's novels, which are few, but his many critical articles, collected essays, travel sketches, and even his countless *koshimaki*[1] recommending other writers' work. A shiver of excitement runs through us as we catch the characteristic note of this voice, one not easy to reproduce in translation, as of an electrical pulse from some remote corner of the universe.

From Haniya and his immediate contemporaries in the "first postwar school" of writers right up to Masahiko Shimada, who is still in his twenties, the evolution of modern Japanese literature has been closely connected with the revolutionary movement, aiming at the transformation of Japanese society. In *Yasahii Sayoku no tame no Kiyūkyoku* ("Divertimento for a *Tender* Left"), the novel which first brought him to prominence, Shimada caricatures the naivety of the peace movement, which he sees as a childish game. He employs, for example, the device of writing *sayoku* (left-wing), that sacred catchphrase of the postwar years, not with ideographs but with the simple phonetic letters that children use before they have mastered the "adult" system of writing. But behind this portrayal, nevertheless, there is clearly an awareness of the passionate sincerity of the young men and women who were involved in violent clashes with the police in the struggle against the Japan-US Security Treaty in 1960 and the unrest on university campuses in 1970. When Yutaka Haniya, Ken Hirano and other writers who had survived the war and its aftermath, launched *Kindai Bungaku* forty years ago, they drew a clear line between art as a servant of revolution and the Communist Party as such. But they still believed in the political effectiveness of literature, and in the end failed to differentiate between "artistic revolution" and "revolutionary art". This left them open to attack by the "nationalist" school, and their influence declined. Haniya's *Shirei*, with its insistence on "permanent revolution", despite this background he has lived through, towers





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Left, a still from the film Ekimae ryokan *(1958), directed by Shirō Toyoda and based on a novel by Masuji Ibuse (born 1898). Ibuse's prolific fictional output consists almost entirely of stories, such as* Tajinko mura, *(1939;* Tajinko Village, *1971) and* Yōhai taichō *(1950;* Lieutenant Lookeast, *1971), which are highly popular in Japan and describe with dry humour Japanese urban and rural life. Ibuse was awarded the Noma Prize, one of Japan's highest literary distinctions, for his longest novel,* Kuroi ame *(1966;* Black Rain, *1969) in which he drew on eyewitness accounts of the Hiroshima catastrophe. In 1982, he published his autobiography,* Ogikubo fūdoki *("Topography of Ogikubo").*

Photo © Hiroko Govaers

Below left, a scene from Kon Ichikawa's film Enjō (Conflagration, *1958) based on the novel* Kinkakuji *(1956;* The Temple of the Golden Pavilion, *1958) by Yukio Mishima (1925-1970). The novel tells the story of a young Buddhist monk who burns down his house of prayer because he is obsessed by its beauty. A prolific writer whose works ranged from an autobiographical novel,* Kamen no kokuhaku *(1949;* Confessions of a Mask, *1958) and other fiction such as* Shiosai *(1954;* The Sound of Waves, *1956) to plays including* Kindai nōgaku shū *(1956;* Five Modern Nō Plays, *1957), Mishima committed public ritual suicide a few days after completing a vast 4-volume epic,* Hōjō no umi *(1965-70;* The Sea of Fertility, *1971-74). Brilliant, full of contradictions, his work reflects the conflict between Western influence and traditional Japanese values.*

amid the darkness, his "voice" continuing to haunt his readers' inner world.

Among the noted writers who did not belong to the Left, Shōhei Ōoka, a disciple of Stendhal, himself experienced life in a prisoner of war camp. His massive *Reite senki* ("Record of the Battle of Leytel"), written as a tribute to his comrades who died during their pitiable flight from a victorious enemy, contains an outstanding analysis of modern war. Another major figure was Yukio Mishima. Mishima never abandoned his right-wing, ultra-nationalistic ideology; he lived the life of a star, fascinating and baffling the mass media, until, like a coiled spring snapping back to its original position, he committed *seppuku* (ritual suicide) out of grief over the state of his country.

More noteworthy is the major talent of Masuji Ibuse, whose position is somewhere between the so-called "I novel" writers (who find their reality in the faithful depiction of the details of their everyday lives) and the "pure literature" school, typified in his younger days by Hideo Kobayashi. Among Ibuse's many works, all distinguished by their stylistic elegance and a highly individual sense of humour, is his long novel *Kuroi ame* (1966; *Black Rain*, 1969), in which he deals directly with the Hiroshima atomic bomb. What led him to write it, he has said, was a sense of unbearable frustration during the Vietnam War at the newspaper reports of the seemingly unending stream of American reinforcements.

Whatever their stylistic differences, Japanese writers are extremely seriousminded. One manifestation of this seriousness is a sense of justice and fairness. Today Kenzaburō Ōe seems to be the sole spokesman of this trend, which may, however, also take the form of a devotion to "pure literature". This approach can be traced back to the "ethics" which all Japanese children were taught in elementary schools before the war, and, to go back further, to the Confucian code of morality which has been deeply rooted in the minds and hearts of Japanese intellectuals ever since the days of the Tokugawa Shogunate, which turned the teachings of Confucius and Mencius into what was virtually a State religion. But the primary question with which this Confucian ethic, unlike Christianity, is concerned is "how best to get through life?", not "what is life for?".

Junnosuke Yoshiyuki, Shūsaku Endō, Shōtarō Yasuoka and others of the so-called "third wave"[2] of postwar writers, rejected what they saw as over-intellectualism, denied that literature could have any effect on politics, and were fond of characterizing themselves as "poor students", "dropouts" or "bad boys". Yet now

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A master of narrative, Yasushi Inoue (born 1907) is the author of many novels whose screen versions have added to his popularity as a writer. The film made in 1963 by Shirō Toyoda from Inoue's novel Yūshū Heiya *tells the story of a beautiful middle-class woman who suffers in her search for true love (above). Inoue is also noted as the author of brilliantly imaginative historical novels such as* Aoki Ōkami *(1960; "The Blue Wolf") and* Fūtō *(1963; "The Storm") set in ancient or medieval times in China, Mongolia and other countries on the Silk Road. He has won many literary prizes and plays a leading role in Japanese cultural life.*

1. A *koshimaki* (literally "loincloth") is a small strip of paper wrapped round the dust cover of a new book, with a short recommendation by a well-known writer or specialist.
2. A term used to designate chronologically the third group of Japanese writers to emerge after the Second World War. The first group began to make their name in 1945-1946; the second appeared around 1950. The "third wave" authors appeared on the literary scene around 1952-1953.

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In 1961, Nagisa Ōshima adapted for the cinema Shiiku *(1958;* The Catch, *1959), a collection of stories which had brought its author, Kenzaburō Ōe (born 1935), a major literary award, the Akutagawa Prize. Written in luxuriant, baroque prose, novels such as* Man'en gannen no futtobōru *(1967;* The Silent Cry, *1974) reflect a preoccupation with Japanese history and politics. Ōe's relationship with his mentally handicapped son has also played an important role in his work, notably in* Kojinteki-na taiken *(1964;* A Personal Matter, *1969) which has been translated into many languages. He has published collections of stories, including* Reintsuñ o kiku onnatachi *(1982), which contains experimental and autobiographical writing focused on the image of a mythical tree.*

Two contemporary writers

Yutaka Haniya (born 1910), novelist and critic, has a special place on the literary scene of modern Japan. From the early 1930s to the end of the Second World War, he followed a path similar to that taken by many left-wing Japanese intellectuals: clandestine political activity, arrest and imprisonment (for over a year, in 1932-1933), then silence during the war years. While in prison Haniya read the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and this encounter with Kantian philosophy was a crucial experience for him. From it grew his fascination with a logic which could defy the limits of reason. In 1945 he decided to devote his life to literature, and with a few friends launched *Kindai Bungaku* ("Modern Literature"), a periodical which for over twenty years would play a decisive role both in ideological debate and in bringing important literary works to public attention. His own long novel *Shirei* ("The Spirits of the Dead") is certainly a literary milestone. This still unfinished work, the first volume of which was published in 1948 and a second in 1976, is an attempt to describe in a five-day scenario the existential quest of several characters who feel they are caught in a mental trap, or in Haniya's own words, to "test the extent of the vast and unique phoneme resounding from one side of the cosmos to the other". After making a name as a novelist, from 1955 onwards Haniya attracted attention as an essayist and through his forthright opinions on literature and politics expressed in such works as *Genshi no naka no seiji* (1960; "Politics in the Field of Hallucination"), a reflection on the origin and nature of political power; *Kage-e no sekai* (1966; "The World of Chinese Shadows"), an autobiographical account of his inner life up to the age of 35; and *Yami no naka no kuroi uma* (1970; "Black Horses in the Gloom"), a collection of nine short stories, which are variations on a theme: thought in dreams, thought in darkness, thought in mirrors. These stories, in which highly abstract philosophical reflections are transformed by the power of the author's imagination and poetic vision, reveal the same originality which distinguishes "The Spirits of the Dead".

Kenji Nakagami (born 1946) was the first writer of the postwar generation to be awarded the Akutagawa Prize, for a short story published in 1975 entitled *Misaki* ("The Cape"). Still only 30 years of age, he had reached a watershed in his work. Until then he had chronicled the lives of the uprooted in stories which had been published from 1966 onwards in various literary magazines and portrayed young provincials who had, like himself, gone to live in Tokyo in the mid-1960s. His work since 1975 has tended to focus on the search for roots. Through his main character, a young man called Akiyuki, Nakagami depicts the complex relationships of a family community in his own region, the Kii Peninsula, where a web of ancient beliefs and superstitions still keeps the living in close contact with the dead. The sequels to *Misaki*, *Karekinada* ("The Sea of Dead Trees") published in 1977, and *Hōsenka* ("Balsamine") published in 1980, which shows how events affect the women of the family, form a trilogy, although the same main character also appears in *Chi no hate shijō no toki* ("Supreme Hours on the Edge of the Earth"), published in 1983. Not the least important aspect of Nakagami's contribution to contemporary literature is that his realistic accounts of the lives of the *burakumin*,[1] from which he came, have helped to break the taboos which oppress this despised group of people.

1. *Burakumin* (literally "people from the hamlets") is the name given to groups such as tanners and certain kinds of butchers who were ostracized by Japanese society during the Edo period, often because of religious taboos. A law was passed in early Meiji which abolished all discrimination towards them, but the prejudices remain, especially as regards employment or marriage prospects.

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they find themselves members of the prestigious Selection Committee for the Akutagawa Literary Prize, and even of the Japan Arts Academy, which makes it look as if they have now become the guardians of "pure literature". In terms of what they really stand for, probably even Yasushi Inoue, who is widely spoken of (especially in the West) as a candidate for the Nobel Prize for Literature, is not a "pure literature" writer.

Not only this group, but also the "I novel" writers, have a latent propensity to classify work into what is and what is not "pure literature", much as at one time it was usual to distinguish between what was and what was not "progressive". The *Kyōfūki* ("Tale of a Mad Wind") of Jun Ishikawa, a writer of astonishing imaginative range and force; the *Hako otoko* (1973; *The Box Man, 1980)* of Kōbō Abe, who has an international reputation as an avant-garde novelist; the *Shiki* ("Four Seasons") of Shinichirō Nakamura—a dazzling picture-scroll of love and lust: none of these comes within this category of "pure literature", because in none of them is the question "how to live?" asked.

This is the kind of literary landscape that I see as I look back at Japanese literature from abroad—a landscape that appears to me in this way because I too am concerned about my country, take an interest in politics, and am a believer in "pure literature". From behind this literary perspective, though—or superimposed upon it—come the "voices" of such writers as Haniya and the much younger Kenji Nakagawa. Other voices, those of Atsushi Mori, Nobuo Kojima, Meisei Gōtō and Minako Ōba, are less easy to "place" within this broad perspective; which paradoxically adds to their appeal.

In Japan it is well understood that there is a clear division of territory between the two most prestigious literary awards, the Akutagawa Prize and the Naoki Prize, the former being concerned with "pure", and the latter with "popular", literature. The members of the Akutagawa Prize Selection Committee sometimes award the Prize to really original work such as Yoshikichi Furui's *Yōko*, Ryū Murakami's *Kagirinaku tōmei ni chikai burū* ("Almost Transparent Blue"), or the woodblock print artist Masuo Ikeda's *Egekai ni sasagu* ("Offering to the Aegean Sea"). But whenever this happens, some members of the Committee object even to the point of resigning, on the ground that the style is too unorthodox or the ideas are too bold. This is always followed by a sharp reaction, and before long the stress is once more on the importance of completeness or "roundedness" in candidate works, rather than on their originality. Future potential is no longer taken into account; and the Prize then tends to go to collections of short stories, unpretentious and small in scale, but with a due measure of *sabi*[3] and a pleasantly readable style not unlike that of the Committee members themselves. This is how devotion to "pure literature" manifests itself.

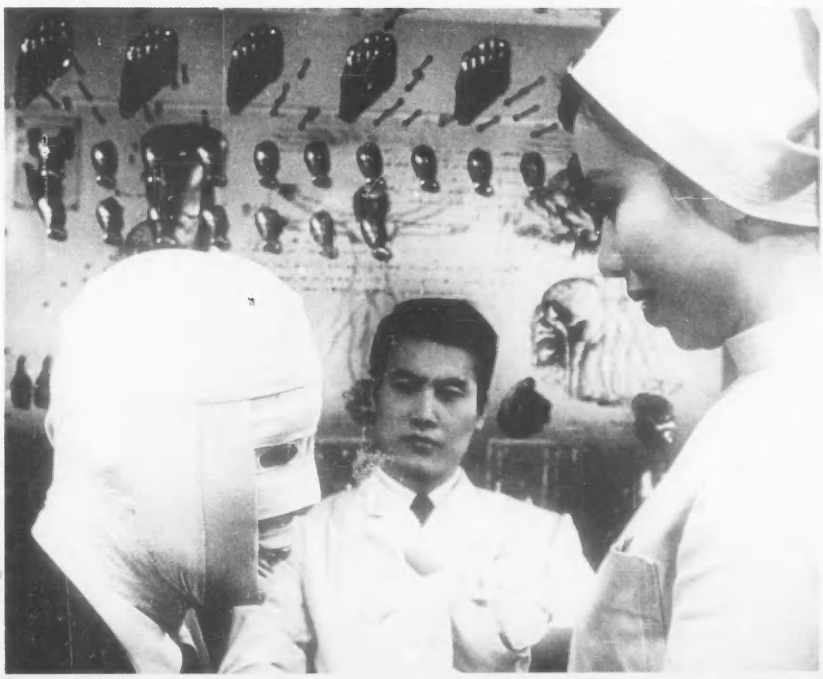
Throughout the 1960s, when this situation was a dominant factor in the literary world, the new "prize-winners" who appeared on the scene year by year were all in their forties or fifties, and voices were raised to deplore this "ageing" of Japanese literature. Then Ryū Murakami's sudden emergence ended this apparent state of saturation. A group of talented young writers, all in their early thirties—Kenji Nakagami, Michitsuna Takahashi, Masahiro Mita, Sō Aono, Haruki Murakami, and Wahei Tatematsu—came on stage close behind him.

Of all the work published by this group, Kenji Nakagami's fine novel *Karekinada* ("The Sea of Dead Trees"), depicting the day-to-day existence of a tough youth struggling to make something of his life within the context of a complex family structure in the remote district of Kumano, sandwiched between the mountains and the sea, is probably the only one to have acnieved full acceptance by the literary establishment. There is a "Roots" element—the tracing of one's origins—in this story, though it is not so prominent as in Yasuoka's *Ryūritan* ("A Tale of Wanderings in a Strange Country"). Like Yoshiyuki's *Suna no ue no shokubutsugun* ("A Cluster of Plants on the Sand"), it is haunted by the horror of incest; and it has many of the specific qualities beloved of the "pure literature" school—especially the lovingly detailed descriptions of the daily life of ordinary country people with neither education nor property. It is filled with sunlight and the sound of wind, the love of flowers, and the smell of sweat; with a sense of oneness with nature.

"When he started work, Akiyuki at last felt the sun soaking into his body. A film of sweat made a second skin, sensitive to the light breeze. His shadow stretched out over the soil as he dug into it with his pick. He scooped the soil up with a spade. He felt the sound of his breathing, as it rose from within his hollow body that was made only of arms, stomach and muscle, resonate with the soil as the air rose from it, smelling of the sun-roasted earth. The air was breathing. The *mountains* were breathing."

But when one reads from the vantage point of "abroad" the successive variations on his theme that Nakagami builds up—"Now he would work. He dug with his pick, lifted the soil with his spade. The pick was Akiyuki. The spade was Akiyuki." "He accepted the sun. He was steeped in its light. Akiyuki melted into the sunlight. He became the trees, the stones, the air. Standing, Akiyuki trembled, like a blade of grass"—what comes across primarily is not the feeling of a lyrical scene depicting a young labourer in love with his work, but a particular music, of the kind which I sus-

The novels of Kōbō Abe (born 1924) are fantastic parables of social life. One of Abe's main themes is the alienation of modern man in an anonymous and stifling world. In Tanin no kao *(1964;* The Face of Another, *1966), adapted for the cinema by Hiroshi Teshihagara in 1966 (below), the hero is an industrialist who is rejected by his wife after being accidentally disfigured, and secretly undergoes plastic surgery in an attempt to fashion a new identity and win her back. Abe established his reputation in Japan in 1951 when his collection of stories* Kabe *won the Akutagawa Prize. The publication of* Suna no onna *(1962;* The Woman in the Dunes, *1964) brought him international recognition. His latest novel,* Hakobune Sakuramaru *("The Ark of Sakura") is mainly set in a nuclear shelter.*



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3. Quiet, elegant simplicity—a quality traditionally much esteemed in Japanese literature. *Editor.*

pect writers of "pure literature" most detest: Rock 'n' Roll, with its powerful, relentless beat ... Not only passages like these, but also the intentional build-up of scenes which are of basic importance for the hero, make it quite clear that this novel was "composed" (using the word in its musical connotation) in a highly intellectual manner. And reading the sequel, *Hôsenka* ("Balsamine"), which depicts the troubled life of the young man's mother, seen from her point of view, I was suddenly reminded of William Faulkner. In his sun-baked Kumano, with its abundance of legends and of tales of blood, Nakagami has created a world as vivid as Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County. No other critic seems to have made this particular point. Who knows—perhaps this too is a spin-off from reading one's own literature abroad. ■

TOKUYOSHI HIRAOKA, *who has taught since 1970 at the Waseda University, Tokyo, has published two collections of short stories, "The Vanished Chimney" and "Eating the Rose", as well as many articles of literary criticism and translations of French authors into Japanese. This article was written during a sabbatical year which the author spent in Paris.*

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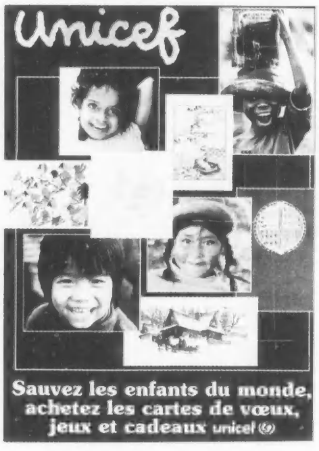

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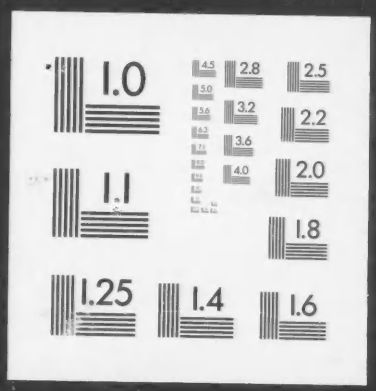
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